LIVING WATER

CHAPTERS FROM THE ROMANCE OF THE POOR STUDENT

BY

HAROLD BEGBIE

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LIVING WATER

The love of liberty is simply the instinct in man for expansion.

. . . man is not to be civilised or humanised, call it what you will, by thwarting his vital instincts.

. . . inequality, like absolutism, thwarts a vital instinct, and being thus against nature, is against our humanisation.

"*. . . the vital impulse of democracy is . . . identical with the ceaseless vital effort of human nature itself.*"

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

LIVING WATER

BEING CHAPTERS FROM THE ROMANCE OF THE POOR STUDENT

BY

HAROLD BEGBIE

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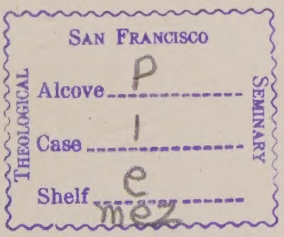
England is asleep ; when she wakes she will be hungry.



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TO THE
WORKERS' EDUCATIONAL
ASSOCIATION

"*Ask yourselves,*" *says Arnold,* "*if you do not sometimes feel in yourselves a sense, that in spite of the strenuous efforts for good of so many excellent persons amongst us, we begin somehow to flounder and to beat the air; that we seem to be finding ourselves stopped on this line of advance or that, and to be threatened with a sort of standstill. It is because we are trying to live on with a social organisation of which the day is over.*"

He says to those people who resent the encroaching spirit of democracy:

"*But these persons are complaining of human nature itself, when they thus complain of a manifestation of its native and ineradicable impulse. Life itself consists, say the philosophers, in the effort* to affirm one's own essence; *meaning by this to develop one's own existence fully and freely, and to have ample light and air, to be neither cramped nor over-shadowed. Democracy is trying* to affirm its own essence; *to live, to enjoy, to possess the world, as aristocracy has tried, and successfully tried, before it.*"

PREFACE

FIFTY years ago Matthew Arnold warned his fellow-countrymen that the time for Energy had gone by and that the time for Intelligence had arrived.

"What," I said, "you hold the England "of to-day cheap, and declare that we do not com- "prehend the situation; yet you rate the England "of 1815 so high and call our fathers and grand- "fathers the foremost people in Europe. Did they "comprehend the situation better than we?"

"Yes," replied my foreign friend, "the situa- "tion as they had it, a great deal better. Their "time was a time for energy, and they succeeded in "it perfectly. Our time is a time for intelligence, "and you are not succeeding in it at all."

We have moved since 1870, during the last four years we have moved with great and almost breathless speed, but it is difficult to believe that the nation is even now vitally conscious of the need for an infinitely greater degree of intelligence among its citizens. And yet it is very certain, far more certain than it was in 1870, that our nation is fast moving, as Arnold said, either to a great transformation or to a great disaster, and that the test will be the test of intelligence.

The stories which compose the body of this book are written to convince the sceptical and to persuade the indifferent that there is a craving in the mind of our working-classes for the noblest benefits of education, and that education has power to enlarge, to

dignify, and to intensify the life of the humblest of our fellow-creatures. They are true stories gathered in the course of a recent tour through industrial England. Besides witnessing to the hunger for self-realisation which I believe to be consciously or unconsciously general to our modern democracy, they also afford an opportunity of learning how the more intelligent of our working-classes are looking towards the perilous business of social reconstruction after the War. But this interest, important as it is, will, I hope, be minor in the reader's mind to the major interest which inspired the writing of the stories. The impression above all others which I desire to leave upon his mind is the conviction that only by an entirely new attitude towards education can we hope to solve our political problems and secure our position in the modern world.

To this end I would ask the reader, before he proceeds to these narratives, to do me the honour of considering the Introduction which follows this Preface, wherein I endeavour to destroy a vulgar error regarding the purpose of Education and to substitute for that error an idea which I am sure is truer and which I hope may be the means of creating a new enthusiasm for education as the greatest instrument of our domestic politics.

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Christianity, says Edward Caird, brought into the world A NEW VIEW OF SOCIAL DUTY. *This view is strikingly expressed in the paradox of St. Paul, "Bear ye one another's burdens . . . Every man shall bear his own burden." It is neither socialism nor individualism: it is both, it is Christianity. Christianity to St. Paul was "a principle that bound all men to each other, and made them members one of another, as no previous religion had ever attempted to do." It was the greatest of revolutions:*

> *"It broke down all the walls of division that had "hitherto separated individuals, families, and nations from "each other; it cast aside and utterly repudiated all the "prejudice of rank and caste, of race and custom, and bade "men, as simply men, recognise each other as brethren. "It sought, in the fire of its charity, to burn up every "grudge and repugnance, every doubt and suspicion that "had made men regard each other with alien eyes, and to "put an end to all the waste of human existence in com- "petition and conflict by binding them into the unity of "one body, animated by one will and one spirit."*

Its aim, he is careful to point out, was not to impoverish but to enrich the lives of those whom it brought together:

> *"It sought rather to fill them with the consciousness of "the supreme worth and greatness of human life, which "is also divine life in every individual who partakes of it, "and so give to each one of them a new sense of individual "independence and responsibility."*

INTRODUCTION
DEAD SOULS

I

EDUCATION rightly understood is a part of religion. It is the gospel of a higher life and belongs to evangelism. In truth it is greater than evangelism in this respect that its conversion covers the entire man—intellectual, moral, and religious. Evangelism restores the sunken and desperate nature, making it morally whole, but intellectually it leaves that nature as it found it. On the other hand, the conversion wrought by education embraces the whole man, purging him intellectually, morally, religiously, giving a new direction to the thoughts and desires of his whole life, and furnishing his intellectual, moral, and religious being with a valid reason and a new enthusiasm for existence.

The education of which I am speaking is not to be confused with the popular notion of that word. It is not a method for succeeding in competitive examinations, not a road to a black coat and a pension, not a rung in the social ladder. The education of which I speak—and for which, as the body of this book movingly testifies, humble men and women hunger, making a hundred sacrifices to receive its reward—is first of all as a ray of light penetrating the cell of the imprisoned soul and afterwards as a key turned in the lock of that prison door. Its end is the liberation of the human spirit.

"As a mere spectacle," says Drummond, "the universe to-day discloses a beauty so transcendent that he who disciplines himself by scientific work finds it an overwhelming reward simply to behold it." This is the education of which we are speaking—a method of enlarging man's spiritual nature until he is in total correspondence with his universe, so far as his spirit can reach. We mean by education the releasing of man's faculties from unnatural inhibitions, the setting free of his capacities from all artificial detentions, the drawing out from his own darkness of those motions of personality which crave for light. In a word, the education of which we speak is a means to enjoyment—enjoyment which exalts the mind and transfigures the whole face of life. We are apostles of education because we believe that here is the one method by which the restless and ascending sons of men may glorify God and enjoy Him for ever.

Drummond found in the mere contemplation of the universe an overwhelming reward. Millions of men behold the stars without emotion and see in a flower nothing to stir their admiration. For millions of men this living universe, threaded by unchanging law, is of no greater curiosity than a scene painted for a theatre. And also to these same millions the literature of the world is of less meaning than their Sunday newspaper; architecture, sculpture, painting, science, philosophy, history, criticism, all these are as a sealed book to them. For millions of men, in these islands alone, it as if Shakespeare, Newton, and Darwin had never passed across the earth. "I do not wonder," said Ruskin, "at what men suffer, but I wonder at what they lose."

II

It will help us to see the sorry condition of the human race in this matter of so great an importance if we reflect upon the relativity of life and death.

The essential characteristic of a living organism is vital connection with its general environment. But one living organism, it is pointed out, is in more vital connection with its environment than another. Life, then, is a relative term. Moss is alive, so is a tree, so is a bird, so is a man. Man is in more vital connection with his environment than a mole or a bat; his correspondences with the universe are more numerous and of a higher kind. He shares the common functions of a living organism with mole and bat—the functions of assimilation, waste, reproduction, and growth—but his connection with the universe is much more vital. This is why it is said that life is asleep in the flower, walking in its sleep in the animal, awake in man. Life is a relative term. *But life is a relative term among men.* In millions of men it is asleep, in millions it is walking in its sleep; in a few, perhaps in none, it is wholly awake.

Now if life is a relative term, so also is death. A man who sees the stars, and hears the music of the sea, and touches the hair of his child, is a living organism; but when his heart ceases to beat and none of these things is possible to him, we say that he is dead—he ceases to be a man, that is to say a living organism in vital correspondence with his environment. But a man who sees neither sun nor star, and who hears neither the sea nor the wind, and can touch nothing in this whole world, may still be living. His heart

may beat, though his eyes are blind and his ears deaf and his hands have been smitten off. He may lie, as some victims of war are now lying, without correspondence of any kind with his environment—without eyes to see, ears to ear, tongue to speak, hands to touch, and legs to move. He is alive, but how little living. He is not dying, but how nearly dead. We say of such a man's life that it is a *living death*.

In Russia they spoke of the serfs in old days as *dead souls*. Gogol's great novel is called by this title. The serf was a living person, enjoying infinitely more freedom than the victims of our modern prison system; but he was not a free man, and the Russian spoke of him as a dead soul.

What science has to say of living organisms in general may be applied in particular to the most living of all living organisms, to man with his mind:

"At the bottom of the biological scale we find "organisms which have only the most limited "correspondence with their surroundings. A tree, "for example, corresponds with the soil about its "stem, with the sunlight, and with the air in con- "tact with its leaves. But it is shut off by its com- "paratively low development from a whole world "to which higher forms of life have additional "access. . . . The murmur of the stream "which bathes its roots affects it not. The marvel- "lous insect life beneath its shade excites in it no "wonder. The tender maternity of the bird which "has its nest among its leaves stirs no responsive "sympathy. It cannot correspond with these "things. To stream and insect and bird it is insen-

"sible, torpid, dead. For this is Death, this irre-
"sponsiveness."

Let us paraphrase the passage: At the bottom of the social scale we find men who have only the most limited correspondence with their surroundings. A typical working-man corresponds with the dullness of his slum, with the routine of the factory in which he works, and with the cheerfulness of the tavern to which he goes as an escape from his miseries. But he is shut off by his lack of education from a whole world to which higher forms of men have additional access. The great pageant of man's history on this planet affects him not. The marvellous beauty of the universe revealed by science excites in him no wonder. The joys, the loveliness, the exaltation, the creative inspiration of literature stir no responsive sympathy. He cannot correspond with these things. To philosophy and science and literature he is insensible, torpid, dead. *For this is Death, this irresponsiveness.*

III

Ignorance is death. By ignorance I mean, not ignorance of books, but ignorance of environment—*irresponsiveness*. Books are not an end in themselves; education may lead to damnation as well as to salvation; books and education are only means to an end, an end that may be missed, but that end is the greatest of all man's goals. The end of education is the loosing of man's soul into the region of wonder, the filling of his darkness with the light of understanding, the nurturing of his spirit on the milk of Paradise. The end of education is to make the dead soul a living soul, and the living soul a growing soul,

and the growing soul a Personality that still hungers and still thirsts for the ultimate satisfactions of divinity.

IV

If it were possible at this time of day to substitute a new term for the word *Education*, a word which has lost much of its ancient magic, I would suggest the more luminous term *Liberation*. For the process of true education is not so much to draw something out of a man as to free his faculties to take something into himself. A rightly educated man is one who corresponds most perfectly with his environment, who has freer access to the highest enjoyments of existence, who feels within himself a vital responsiveness to the loveliness, the majesty, the wonder, and the interest of the universe, who is conscious within himself of a permanent attention and a continual growth.

If democracy means to attain equality it must seriously accustom itself to an entirely fresh conception of education. It must cease to think of it as a weapon in the material struggle for existence. It must cease to think of it as a stage in life. It must cease to think of it as a matter restricted to books. Education must mean to it a process for the liberation of the higher faculties, as a process for the completion of personality, and as a process which never ends. It must realise, too, that the manner in which education is given has a great importance, and that there is an indefinable spirit or atmosphere in certain schools which enhances in a degree not to be measured the instruction of their pedagogues. Education must be seen as something spiritual, as something which not

merely quickens intelligence but ennobles the whole nature of man. It must be reverenced as a religion.

V

Matthew Arnold says of our serious and Biblical ancestry in the early part of the seventeenth century, obsessed by the power of conduct, that it *entered the prison of Puritanism, and had the key turned upon its spirit there for two hundred years:*

> " They did not know, good and earnest people
> " as they were, that to the building up of human
> " life there belong all those other powers also—the
> " power of intellect and knowledge, the power of
> " beauty, the power of social life and manners."

This is what democracy, in search of equality, must not forget when it comes to the building up of human life after the present war. The education which is to give it this equality must be an education which takes account of conduct, as the Puritans did, but which must also take account of the power of intellect and knowledge, the power of beauty, the power of social life and manners. Democracy must put itself to school, not to get a black coat but to learn the rules of a larger, freer, and happier existence. There can be no equality, no semblance of equality, until this lesson is learned.

The first stage on this road must be an awakening to the faults of our State schools and the faults of those private schools in which the unhappy children of our middle-class are done to an intellectual death. Democracy should not only set up a far better State school but should destroy the middle-class school. The middle classes in England, as Arnold said, have

every reason not to rest content with their private schools. He declared that the State could do better for them:

"By giving to schools for these classes a public "character, it can bring the instruction in them "under a criticism which the stock of knowledge "and judgment in our middle-classes is not of "itself at present able to supply. By giving them "a national character, it can confer on them a great- "ness and a noble spirit, which the tone of these "classes is not of itself at present adequate to "impart. Such schools would do them a great "service by stimulating them, and making them "look into their own weak points more closely."

This argument, it will be seen, is an indictment of the English middle-classes, an indictment of their knowledge and judgment, and of their tone. They are not sufficiently educated to know a good school from a bad one, they are so little mindful of the value of knowledge that they pay scant heed to the education of their children, their spirit is so poor that they attach no importance to that greatness which real education imparts to the human soul. Democracy must come to the rescue of these important classes. Education must be a national passion.

Arnold shows how the French, who have a fiery faith in equality, conferred a boon on the whole nation when it founded lyceums, not for the aristocracy, but for the vast middle class of Frenchmen.

"Through the intervention of the State this class "enjoys better schools for its children, not than the "great and rich enjoy (that is not the question),

" but than the same class enjoys in any country
" where the State has not interfered to found them.
" The lyceums may not be so good as Eton and
" Harrow; but they are a great deal better than a
" *Classical and Commercial Academy*."

He quotes the opinion of Mr. Hamerton concerning the French peasantry:

" They are . . . full of intelligence; their
" manners are excellent, they have delicate percep-
" tions, they have tact, they have a certain refine-
" ment which a brutalised peasantry could not
" possibly have. If you talk to one of them at
" his own home or in his field, he will enter into
" conversation with you quite easily, and sustain
" his part in a perfectly becoming way, with a
" pleasant combination of dignity and quiet
" humour. The interval between him and a
" Kentish labourer is enormous."

This, says Arnold in a characteristic passage, is indeed worth our attention. He goes on:

" In general the pleasures, recreations, eating and
" drinking of English people, when once you get
" below that class which Mr. Charles Sumner calls
" the class of gentlemen, are to one of that class
" unpalatable and impossible. In France there is
" not this incompatibility. Whether he mix with
" high or low, the gentleman feels himself in a
" world not alien or repulsive, but a world where
" people make the same sort of demands upon life,
" in things of this sort, which he himself does. In
" all these respects France is the country where the
" people, as distinguished from a wealthy refined

"class, most live what we call a humane life, the "life of civilised men."

VI

These words, so full of the finest discernment and the truest wisdom, never made the smallest impression on the England of the Eighties, and have not now, it is to be feared, penetrated to the consciousness of democracy. But English democracy never had a truer captain than this rare and exquisite spirit whom our Philistines dismissed with coarse laughter as the "apostle of culture."

He directed England's eyes to France at a time when the French were detested and vilified by our ignorant middle-classes, because in that country there existed "a general equality in a humane kind of life." That is the secret, he declared, of the passionate attachment with which France inspires all Frenchmen.

"There is so much of the goodness and agree-
"ableness of life there, and for so many. It is the
"secret of her having been able to attach so
"ardently to her the German and Protestant people
"of Alsace, while we have been so little able to
"attach the Celtic and Catholic people of Ireland.
"France brings the Alsatians into a social system
"so full of the goodness and agreeableness of life;
"we offer to the Irish no social attraction. . . .
"The social system which equality creates in
"France is, in the eyes of others, such a giver of
"the goodness and agreeableness of life, that they
"seek to get the goodness by getting the
"equality."

It is, perhaps, the greatest condemnation of the social system in England that a man like Matthew Arnold, so inspired and of so lofty and noble a spirit, was prevented by the very inequality of that system from reaching the multitude for whom his message was light and liberation. Such was that system, and perhaps still is, that the masses of our people, if they had been able to read the books of Arnold, if they had been able to feel that here was something more interesting than the Sunday newspaper's account of murders, rapes, adulteries, burglaries, and arsons, would not have understood his meaning.

That meaning is now making itself clear in the minds of those whose faith in democracy is the foundation of their political philosophy. It is seen that equality cannot be obtained by Act of Parliament, that when Jack says he is as good as his master he is not proving his culture but rather exhibiting his bad manners, that better wages and healthier conditions and shorter hours do not bring about a state of equality, that the nationalisation of capital will not lead to equality, and that the uprooting of ancient aristocratic traditions will not bring it to pass; it is seen that equality is a matter of the spirit, and that this spiritual equality can never become in England the foundation of her social system until democracy has possessed itself, through education, of the power of intellect and knowledge, the power of beauty, the power of social life and manners.

The soul of English democracy must be liberated from its living death before it can affirm its essence, before it can achieve personality.

I

THE SAINT MAKER

EVERYBODY in Swindon knows him by his Christian name, which is Reuben; but the daughter of Thomas Hughes, author of "Tom Brown's Schooldays," dubbed him the "Saint Maker," and to many of his intimates this is the best title that could be found for him.

He is a man of the most exuberant good nature, shining with love of his fellow-men, and singing with enthusiasm for life; a man getting up in years, but active and athletic, with inexhaustible physical strength and irrepressible spiritual thanksgiving—a broad-shouldered, thick-set man, with a red face, sunken bright eyes, a high peak-like white forehead, rather narrow, the bald head sloping back sharply to the base of the skull.

"You must understand, mister," he said to me, "that though I'm a councillor and a Socialist, a greater Socialist than ever I was before, I'm sticking to the sentimental ticket. I'm no use to the practical man. The successful man laughs at me. But the sentimental ticket suits me, and, bless your life, I'm so happy that I've got no words to describe what happiness is!"

I invited him to tell me how he came by this happiness, suggesting that he should begin at the beginning and tell me the story of his life.

"I was born in the country," he said, "in dear old

Gloucestershire, and I had good parents, lovely parents, whose memories will delight me as long as I live. There is only one complaint I've got against them, and it's a complaint I bring against society in general; they didn't understand a slow child. I was a slow child, and I was put through the same hoop as my brother Alf, who was a smart boy—a boy to whom learning was natural. But my parents came to the conclusion that I hadn't got it in me to be a scholar, just because I was slow at my books, and so they took me away from school when I was only a nipper. Mind you, I wasn't sorry, not at the time, I wasn't. Oh, no! I didn't like school. When I could dodge it I did. But looking back now, I see that if there had been a proper system for slow boys, and if I had been given the right sort of encouragement, I might have made a far better start in life."

"As it was . . . ?"

"As it was, when I had reached eight years of age I used to clean boots before breakfast, go to school for the morning, take out a blind man in the afternoon, sell newspapers at night, and go round with the meat of a Saturday. I was the errand boy for the district. Anybody could buy me for tuppence or threepence."

"You had no encouragement at all?"

"Later on my class leader in the Sunday School gave me a feeling I might do something. He had faith in me. Perhaps that was the beginning. It's wonderful what faith can do for a boy, even for a slow boy. Isn't that true, mister?"

"Was there no intellectual atmosphere in your home?"

"There was a political atmosphere. My father was

a strong Liberal, and he used to lay down the law at meal times. I picked up a good many notions in that way."

He continued his story: "At the age of sixteen I got into the Gloucester Waggon Works, and stayed there till I was twenty-three. I might have stayed longer but for the accidents. Accidents were always happening. In those days nobody took much care about how the workers were situated in factories. I lost a few of my fingers, and so I was no use to the firm."

He held up a hand minus some finger tips.

"Did they pension you?"

"No fear!"

"Compensation?"

"Not a bit of it! Why, bless your life, in those days nobody thought a workman had any rights."

"What happened?"

"Well, I had to look out for another job. I took up the insurance business, and I've been in that line ever since. But this is the interesting part of my story. I began to feel when I got to manhood a yearning for education. I knew I had missed something. I felt something inside me moving about dissatisfied and resentful. I thought to myself, 'It's time, Reuben, you began to study.' I seemed to know by instinct that my brain wanted feeding. And so I saved up money and bought books. I was always buying books, picking them up here, there, and everywhere, and now I've got a library of two or three thousand volumes. But, of course, I couldn't have found my way alone. I should have got lost in the wilderness, or stuck in a bog, if it hadn't been for the

University Extension Lectures. Those lectures were my beginning of a new life. It was wonderful what they did for me. I began to feel my own soul within me. I began to see life as I had never seen it before. The beauty and mystery of Nature on one hand and the misery and wretchedness of civilisation on the other. I left the Liberal Party and joined the Social Democrats. Mister, I was a regular firebrand! My life then was divided between insurance and the soap-box. Up I'd get on every possible occasion and protest against this, that, and the other thing. Bless you, I was a regular Boanerges. I had done with religion, I had done with Liberalism. I saw, all around me, weak women being ruined, good men being scrapped, and the greed of the profiteer turning life into slavery and shame. And who was protesting? The Liberals? The Church? Why, bless your life, they were both mixed up in it. Then came the Boer War. I've got no grudge against a man because he lives the other side of somewhere else, and I couldn't see why we should go on killing those Boers. I got outside Liberalism altogether; I wanted to work with men who felt as I did, and who were out to make a better world, not to grind their own axes. I lost all patience with the religious. It's wonderful how bitter the soap-box will make a man against religion. I used to be very angry with parsons. Things are different now. I'm getting back to a Creator. I'm not orthodox, but I want Something I can pray to. I don't believe in the virgin birth, the resurrection, or in miracles; but I want Christ. We want Christ on the Statute Book. Religion isn't ended yet, not true religion. I now read the Bible more than ever I did

when I was orthodox. I read it for its beauty. Even now, when everybody knows I am an agnostic, I speak to Sunday School classes. Something is bringing me nearer and nearer to Christ every day I live; but, mind you, it isn't the orthodox Christ; it's more the human Christ of Socialism and love. And yet there's a divinity there, too, just as there is in Nature."

"How has this change come about?"

"It began in 1907. That is the golden year of my life, the unforgettable year of my soul. It was then I got into contact with the Workers' Educational Association, and we came together at Oxford."

"What did you think of Oxford?" I asked. His eyes shone and a smile irradiated his face.

"Is there," he asked, "another name on the map like Oxford? If there is, I don't know it. Oxford! Shall I ever forget my feelings when I got among those old colleges and breathed that air into my very soul? Oxford is the greatest spiritual experience of my life. It gave me hope. It showed me the way to a higher life, a newer life, a fuller life, a life full of sweetness and peace. I knew that I might have to go into the dark again, but I knew there'd be no more night in my soul. I knew I should never become an educated man, but still I knew I should touch life. And I did. Mister, I've touched my soul. I know I've got a soul. Oxford! Why, it was like coming into the light! After tremendous darkness, the light! Every year since then, never missing it once, I've taken my wife and children either to Oxford or to Cambridge. I go there to keep my soul alive. Perhaps one of the great influences was the comradeship

I got from the W.E.A. For a man like me, uneducated but longing for education, to find himself in a place like Oxford with a lot of other working-men, listening to lectures, and talking over the lecture together afterwards, why, this means hope, and encouragement, and happiness.

"Everything in my life dates from that experience. I became a real student. I knew what life was for. I knew that life is growth in understanding. I gave my time to the W.E.A., not to politics, and I went to the poets for my ideas, not to the newspapers. And yet I'm a better Socialist than ever I was before. I don't believe in class Socialism, but I do believe in a Socialism of comradeship, rich and poor and foreigners all together, humanity bound together in happiness and joy. I refuse to be a party to the class war. Education has taught me there is no class. The nation is one to me, and humanity is one to me. I bow my head before the good and the great—before nobody else, unless it's a child. I'm outside the Church, and yet I go to all the little churches, loving them, feeling the spell of them, because someone has worshipped there. You understand, mister? Ah, how often do I get off my bicycle and go into a little village church, and stand there, just feeling the deep meaning of it, the meaning that doesn't have anything to do with dogmas. Ah, but I love those little old houses of prayer! Cathedrals are like poetry to me. I couldn't tell you the period of any of them, but I can feel their beauty flooding into my soul and lifting me up above my petty self. All the years I spent on the soap-box couldn't destroy my soul. If I wanted a title for my life, I'd call it 'From the Soap-Box to

the University.' On the soap-box a man sees no further than his own nose. At a University a man looks up to Infinity. If he looks long enough he sees something very like God. The W.E.A. has taken me from politics, but it hasn't made a pedant of me; I still take the sentimental side. I'm not afraid of our movement being nobbled by the capitalists, as some are. Education can never be nobbled. Education is the truth of a man's soul breaking free from the moulds of a false world. When I was an S.D.F.'er I was a class socialist talking nonsense; now that I'm a student of the W.E.A. I'm a stronger socialist than ever, and my Socialism is practical; it's the socialism that's coming, and coming soon, the socialism of man's soul. But my love is in literature, not in politics. Poetry!—ah, I find my soul in that! And yet it makes me every now and then look back with regret and bitterness to the past. I could have broken my heart last week. I was reading a poem by Matthew Arnold, and I came across a passage I couldn't understand. That made me think of my wasted boyhood."

I asked him to tell me the authors who had mostly influenced him.

He replied: "Arnold's 'Culture and Anarchy,' Mill's 'Liberty,' Emerson's 'Essays,' Mazzini's 'Faith in the Future,' and Walter Bagehot's 'History of the Constitution.' Arnold made me see that the successful man is not the good citizen. His revolt against the successful man gave me a new feeling towards society. Emerson kept saying to me, 'Reuben, break the mould,' urging me to get close to Nature and to see the truth for myself. Mazzini

taught me that a man must have a religion, God or Beauty or Nature. Mazzini was a great fellow. Matthew Arnold gave me a wonderful help by his pointing my soul away from the vulgar and the artificial towards sweetness and light. I owe him a great debt. And I love his poetry. Mill made me tolerant of other people's views. He broke up my soap-box for me. Bless your life, that was a great mercy to me! I saw that good men may differ from me. What a revelation! I don't say now that a man is a rotter who isn't a socialist."

"How far does your socialism take you?"

"I'd Socialise land, shipping, railways, insurance, and drink. I'd have municipal theatres, and markets, and trams, and lighting. I'd leave retail trade to Individualism for the present, but only for the present. I think Co-operation may solve most of our industrial problems. I've got great faith in that principle. I want to see the little grocer taken over, not scrapped. I feel sorry for those men, mister. You remember the epitaph—'Born a man and died a grocer'? That's a miserable life. We must do things kindly. We don't want violence or upheavals of any kind. We want growth. We want the whole nation with us in making a better world."

He came by his title of "Saint Maker" in this fashion.

It occurred to him that the people of Swindon ought to know something of the country about them and of the famous men who lived in those regions. He therefore organised a number of excursions, under the name of rambles, getting people to pay a few pence for a trip to some beautiful village, where they might

hear a lecture, visit some shrine, enjoy a rural tea, and then return with the moon to their homes in Swindon. In this way he discovered a number of "unvisited tombs," as Bernard Bosanquet might call them, and made a great number of uncalendared saints.

For example, he discovered that Robert Raikes had been greatly inspired by a curate named Thomas Stock, who lived in a Gloucestershire village. Accordingly he inaugurated a "Sunday School Day," and a party drove out from Swindon to do honour to this unknown curate in the village where he had ministered. He discovered that George Washington's family came from the village of Garsden, and so a Washington Day was inaugurated, and off went the bicycles and char-à-bancs to Garsden to pay tribute to the ancestors of the great American.

"We're finding out," he told me, "the biography of our county. We visit the shrines of Richard Jefferies, Thomas Browne, William Morris, Keble, George Herbert, Latimer, St. Anselm, Lord Shaftesbury, Macaulay, and Hampden. You've no idea how rich our neighbourhood is in men whose lives should always be held in remembrance. I love these rambles. I'm a dreamer who visits shrines. After the war, I'll get a motor-cycle and visit scores of shrines. I want people to take an interest in these things. Why, bless your life, I'll find you people in Swindon who have never seen a village, never even been to our own town gardens. That's a fact. Think of it! But we do everything we can to break up this apathy. We arrange for mothers to come, prams and all. 'We'll get the baby over the stile,' we tell them. That's the spirit of the W.E.A.—comradeship. Why should

a woman be shut off from intellectual pleasures because she has got a baby? It isn't fair, mister. Everybody ought to have a chance to get back to Nature. Think what the country can do for your soul. Why, bless your life, it's meat and drink to the spirit of man, meat and drink."

It was at this point of our conversation that Reuben became most impressive, and it was a very considerable impressiveness. He seemed to lose any feeling he might have had before that I needed convincing; indeed, seemed rather to be talking to himself than to an auditor, his bright eyes growing more serious, his voice sinking to a deeper tone, the whole aspect of the man becoming visibly grander.

"The only thing," he said, "that could make me poor, would be the taking from me of my books, my few friends, and the fields. I am so happy with these possessions that a millionaire couldn't buy me. I can go out on to the downs, and pray as Richard Jefferies used to pray—pray to the great Spirit of the universe, pray to Nature. I go many midnight rides on my bicycle, and, coming up to the brow of a hill, and standing there and looking at the little dark villages below me, sleeping peacefully in the moonlight, I feel that I'm looking at democracy through the W.E.A., and understanding it—yes, understanding it. Men and women, what are they after all but Nature's babies? Nature is our mother. I get under a tree, look up at him, talk to him, tell him how beautiful he is. I listen to all the sounds that breathe from the earth. I look up at the stars burning in the vault of heaven. And I think of the heart of man in the midst of all this beauty, and wonder, and glory, with its

sorrows and joys, its longings and defeats, its goodness and its weakness, its love and its pain. And it's then I seem to see truth, right into the very heart of truth. I know then that I owe more to my fellow men than to my employers; that Labour is aiming at what it can buy, instead of aiming at what it can't buy, but can get for nothing—Beauty; and that life is meant for love and joy, not for toil and wages. In the country I seem to see the mistakes we have made so clearly, so overwhelmingly—the mistake of commercialising life, commercialising the soul of man. What does the soul need for its happiness? Little, very little. But we make it miserable by overloading it with a lot of things it doesn't need. The soul only wants the feeling of growth, the feeling that it can enter into beauty, that it is approaching truth, that it is sustained by goodness. Ah, the beauty of isolation, of solitude; the beauty of being all alone with nature, particularly with the night and the stars. It's then that a man lives, it's then that a man can pray; it's then that Socialism comes into a man's soul with the very breath of his Creator."

He looked at me, and asked, "Have you ever flung your hat into the air and given three cheers—just for the sheer joy of Nature? I have, over and over again. I've laughed and sung aloud in the fields. Sometimes the feeling comes in another way—it's subdued, it's prayerful. I see a mother with her children in a cottage garden, or the spire of a village church, or sheep on a hill, or trees in the distance, and sometimes I must laugh and sing; yes, fling my hat into the blue air and give three lovely cheers; and sometimes I want to cry, out of sheer gratitude for the gift

of these things. How the poets come to a man in those moments, beautiful old words uttering themselves again in his soul like music from heaven! Isn't that true, mister? How simple life seems! How easy to be happy! How natural to be good!"

After some moments he said to me, "I shall never forget a sermon I heard preached at Oxford by old Bishop Perceval. He preached to the W.E.A., and his sermon was about the spiritual life of Oxford—the invisible spiritual influence of Oxford, its part in English history, its place in the nation. You seemed to feel that all the politics and trade and battles and gaudiness of history were just nothing but ripples on the surface, and that the great thing in our national life was the soul of England seeking the light and the truth. I remember a mate of mine from Swindon whispering in my ear at the end of that sermon—'Reuben, I could pray now, and so could you; we could both pray.' Both of us were outside the orthodox faith, and we're both outside of it still, but neither of us will ever forget that sermon and the feeling that came over our souls. I've never wiped Oxford off me. I've got her all round me to this moment. I feel that she is *my* University, that I've taken a degree there, and that she will be my Alma Mater to the end of my days."

"But nature is even more to you?"

"Oh, yes. I love Oxford only because she has helped me to feel towards nature with understanding and love. I am a worshipper of nature. The fields are my church. I sometimes think that the hills are my politics. I'm sure of this, man suffers by the loss

of contact with nature. I shall never forget the remark of a poor charwoman we took with us on one of our rambles. 'I never knew,' she said, 'the world was so beautiful.' Think of it: never knew the face of nature; never knew it! But, bless your life, there are thousands like that. They live in back streets, stewed up in stifling slums, seeing not one blade of grass, not a single leaf or flower, nothing all round them but blackness, and smoke, and a struggle to get bread. Ah, that's a tragedy. And then there's the danger. Town life creates vice and encourages sin. Life like this is unnatural, and so it gets perverse. But nature gives men their natural food. I always encourage people to get out into the country, if it's only once a week. If a man loves nature he won't go on the booze; if a woman loves nature she'll want her cottage right. Nature is the great educator. I see danger for the State in shutting millions of people out of nature. It's dehumanising the race. Education by itself can't undo the mischief. I'm strong on that point. Education can kill the soul. Ah, it can! Many a scholar pays a high price for his knowledge; he pays for it with his soul. I hate to see a man giving up his mind to economics; it's like suicide. Life is bigger than economics. The soul of man can't breathe for long in that atmosphere. It suffocates for want of fresh air; it goes blind for lack of colour and light; it dies for lack of love. Isn't that true, mister? I'm dead against making education the new god of the State. The mind of man isn't economic; it's literary. It wants music, it wants inspiration, it wants dreams. No; education is only of service to the soul of man when it is leading us to a shrine

where we can fall down and worship. That's what the W.E.A. stands for. Education has got to lead men back to nature. It has got to rescue us from commercialism, not to plunge us deeper into it than ever before. As I see education, it's food for the soul —not facts for the mind, though they are useful enough in their proper place. Education has got to give us a grander humanity, simpler but grander; it has got to pull us off the soap-box and take us into the great Oxford of the hills and valleys. We don't want a mean democracy; we don't want a clever and covetous and economic democracy; we want a democracy that's full of the joy of life, large-hearted, generous, grateful, and worshipping. Yes, the older I grow I see that man must worship something. He can't be happy without a heaven in the stars."

Reuben is a writer, and his essays appear in a Swindon newspaper. As the young men of Swindon are great emigrants, and as their faithful friends left behind often send them this local paper, it happens that from time to time Reuben receives long letters of affectionate gratitude from all over the world; letters of gratitude because his reference to some field or river or wood has revived memories of home and childhood in the hearts of those far-away emigrants. He is more happy, I think, in these letters than in all the honours he has received from his townsmen.

He is a local politician as a matter of duty; by nature he is a poet.

II

CANDLE ENDS

MY first meeting with Mr. —— concerned his office. He is the Parliamentary Secretary of a Government Department. The information which he gave me on this occasion was of an interesting nature, but it was the interest of the man himself which made me ask whether I might not come to see him in the following week to talk about his personal experiences as a working man. He is one of those men so sincerely and disinterestedly anxious to be of service to other people that he readily gave me this appointment.

A few days before my first meeting with him he had saved a critical situation for the Government by his courage and by the force of his patriotic appeal to organised Labour; just before my second meeting with him he had made a remarkable speech in the House of Commons which had won tributes of admiration from every school of politics and journalism.

He was born of poor parents in Lancashire, and left an elementary school at ten years of age to earn his own living in a cotton mill. There were eight in the family, and they occupied a small four-roomed house. His father was illiterate, but a man of sound sense, with an earnest mind for religion.

The sufferings of this little boy in a Lancashire cotton-mill were very great, and from his very first

experience of that discipline he conceived a strong hatred for industrialism.

He was shaken out of sleep at five o'clock in the morning, and after a mouthful of breakfast set out on a walk of nearly three miles to the factory. After a day of utter exhaustion in the unnatural atmosphere of an old-time cotton factory he dragged himself home to supper at seven o'clock.

"Still, lad as I was," he told me, "that cotton factory put the great question to my mind. I asked myself again and again, getting no further with the matter, Why? That was the question always before me. I used to watch the masses of lads and lasses streaming through the narrow streets to the factories of Oldham, and I used to say to myself, The law must put this right. I felt that it was wrong, all wrong. I felt that it was wicked. I used to get hot about it in my mind, hating it with all my soul, and feeling that the law was wicked to allow such cruelty. That feeling in my boy's mind was the beginning of my career. It set my thinking-machinery to work. I was of a lonely disposition. I suffered in health. I used to lie awake at night thinking of the hardness and cruelty of life. I used to think of these things walking by myself to and from the factory. They were the only food I had for my poor little starved mind."

He went on to tell me that while he was still a lad he became conscious of the shame of ignorance. He knew that he could not speak grammatically, that while others spoke grammatically without any effort it was a struggle for him to express his thoughts in any language at all. This made him bitterly ashamed.

"I asked myself," he said, "why it was I could not speak grammatically. I asked myself what I had done to be deprived of the chances of intelligent speech. And it was the shame of my ignorance that turned my thoughts to the question of education. I joined a night-school. For two or three years I worked like a slave in and out of that night-school to get learning. I used to collect candle-ends, and sit up at night reading books and copying out sentences I bought a dictionary for fourpence at a second-hand shop, and wrote out all the words it contained—a task that occupied me for a matter of four months. By those same candle-ends I read Shakespeare and Milton. I made myself unpopular in the home by reading aloud; I knew it was a good exercise and would help me to remember what I was reading. I bought Cassell's Shakespeare when I was eighteen, a tremendous prize, and I've got it now. But with this hunger for learning there was also a very strong desire to work for my class. I remember feeling a great curiosity about France, and how Labour organised itself among the French people. I bought what books I could on the subject. A study of those books led me to feel that I was all at sea. There was no one to guide me. I had no one to give me a word of advice. And I only had odd times, when I was thoroughly tired, for my floundering explorations. But I realised that to make any real use of knowledge in a social sense one thing was necessary. I must first of all study history."

He told me that he plunged straight away into this study, and for some time felt that he was beginning to understand the movement of human evolution;

but presently he branched off to economics and social questions, so great and increasing was his hatred of industrialism. "I wanted to alter things," he said; "I wanted to be a fighter. Politics called me and I had to go."

"Can you remember," I asked him, "what it was in particular which made you hate industrialism?"

"It was my own personal sufferings," he replied. "Industrialism cheated me of my childhood, robbed me of my health, and prevented me from developing my mind. I knew that I was little better than a slave. My freedom amounted to very little. For the greater part of the twenty-four hours I was the slave of a body of men who were using my childhood for no other purpose than to make themselves rich. They didn't care if the atmosphere of the rooms was suffocating, nor if the toil for which they paid me the barest pittance dragged all the strength out of me, nor if the men set over me to see I worked like a galley-slave were foul-mouthed and tyrannical. They cared nothing for these things. They had one object. and that was money. My soul was of no more account to them than a fly on the ceiling. As for my happiness, my right to happiness, they'd have kicked me out of the place if I had mentioned such a claim."

"Did religion have any effect upon you at this time?"

"I was a regular chapel-goer," he replied, "but I soon saw that man must get up from his knees and do things for himself if he was to end the cruelty and injustice of our social system."

"And so you studied economics?"

"Before I was twenty I had read Karl Marx, Adam Smith, and John Stuart Mill. Oh, yes, I was becoming an out and out socialist. To improve my grammar I read Ruskin and Emerson. To get the swing of language I read Dickens. But my main study was in economics. I used to read far into the night, burning up I don't know how many candle-ends, and punishing my eyes more than I now dare to think about. But, mind you, there was no self-sacrifice in all this. I tasted in those days the joy of existence. I was like an entombed miner digging his way out and feeling himself near at last the beautiful air and the blue sky. Those were the greatest days of my life. I shall never taste such joy again. It didn't matter to me that I had to be up next morning at five o'clock. On and on into the night I read my second-hand books and passed clean away from hateful industrialism and all the sordid cares of a struggle for existence. Ah, those were great days—so great indeed that I can almost forgive industrialism for having made me suffer tortures which I don't like to think about even now."

As he spoke there came a smile of enthusiasm into his grey eyes which are rather sorrowful as a rule, the eyes of a man who has suffered both in body and soul. One felt that but for the romance of letters, the high joy of the intellectual life, he might have been one of the most bitter and vindictive apostles of the class war.

He perceived very early in his youth the supreme necessity for organising Labour; and at the age of twenty-two he left the cotton-mill to become the secretary of a workman's union. For twenty-seven

years he remained at this work, entering Parliament as a Labour Member, and coming now in the midst of his country's struggle for existence into the service of the Government.

From this point he spoke to me of the future of English democracy.

He thinks that War has rendered our society an inestimable service in drawing all classes into a communion so fairly intimate that at least we all understand each other better than we did in the summer of 1914. He said that he was conscious in himself of a great enrichment in the meaning of the word Democracy. The idea of a class war is repellent to him. He regards such an idea as suicidal. All the classes are necessary to each other, and if each class faithfully does its duty to the State, realising that it has a far higher duty than the duty to itself, the community, he is sure, will enter upon a new and richer prosperity.

"It is now seen by the community," he said, "that the workman has a claim upon life, that he is entitled to something more than wages, that he has a right to a point of view. The community begins to understand that the workman is a Person. All the trouble of old times came from the refusal of society to admit this very elementary but most important proposition. The workman was never regarded as a Person. He was looked upon as a unit in a vast mass of second-rate humanity. Education was withheld from him. He was housed worse than cattle. He was left to sink or swim according to his own efforts. He, on whom the safety and the wealth of the State so largely depended, was looked upon as a dangerous, disagree-

able, uncivilised, and inconvenient animal. All this has been changed. The difference between the old factory in which I worked and the factory in which men work to-day is as great as is the difference between a smoky kitchen in a slum and a drawing-room in a rich man's house. And other changes have been made also of as great a character. Wages are far higher; the hours of labour are shorter; and the whole conditions of industrialism are infinitely more rational and humane. In fact, the changes in a workman's life since I was a boy are enormous. The further changes which are necessary should be made without strife. Reason can settle all our difficulties."

He welcomes with no misgiving the idea of widening the ranks of the Labour Party to include those who work for the State in any honourable capacity. It seems to him unreasonable to limit the future of the Labour Party to the efforts of manual workers. On the contrary, he feels that Labour has no greater and more pressing need than the help which can be given to it by the trained mind of the brain-worker.

No man with a childhood so embittered and impoverished ever reached full manhood with a heart so free from bitterness of any kind. Education saved him from this disaster. It was education which provided for his young and tortured mind a way of escape from the destroying influences of the old industrialism, and it was education which guided him from a partial and rather intolerant view of society to a view which is generous and statesmanlike.

"I no longer look upon the Labour movement," he told me, "as anything in the nature of a class war. or indeed as a self-interested movement directed

against the self-interest of other people. I see it as a world-wide movement to gain security and righteousness for the masses of the whole world. Democracy has come to mean in my mind something far grander than a synonym for manual workers. I regard it rather as a faith, as an idea, as something yet to be achieved and well worth dying for; as a power that will liberate and uplift all the nations of the earth, and give to every single individual comprising those nations the fullest opportunity to enrich his own life. I cannot conceive of any man wishing to limit such a faith as this to a particular class or sect of a people. It belongs to the world. It is the one great religion of humanity. All who love their fellow-men belong to this faith. It is the one thing worth living for. It is the only inspiration I can think of for a man who has ceased to be an animal. To make the world a better world, to make it saner, to make it kinder, to make it safer, surely this is the desire of every man and every woman who have felt the horror of this War in their souls, and who perceive that the salvation of the human race depends absolutely upon intelligence and comradeship."

He told me that he has no fear for the future concerning this country. He thinks that during the War the principle of co-operation has penetrated so deeply into the national life that we can never go back to the old slovenliness of the days before Armageddon. He attaches great importance to this principle. In his judgment the future development of our national life will be almost entirely governed by the principle of co-operation, and this principle, powerfully affecting the lives of individuals, will give a peaceful character

to our social evolution, saving it from the turbulence and dismembering violence of anything in the nature of revolution.

"To my mind," he said, "by far the greatest effect of this War on our social system is its penetration of the national life with the principle of co-operation. Directly you admit that principle, you've begun to build on the only Socialism which can benefit the people all round."

But he is firmly convinced that even this great moral principle of co-operation depends for its successful activity upon the education of democracy. The whole movement of society, he perceives, is towards truth; and this progress of humanity from the darkness of ignorance to the saving light of knowledge hangs upon the intelligence of democracy. It must be a slow, painful, and impeded progress so long as the masses of the nation are dead to the higher interests of existence.

"A great awakening," he said, "on the part of the whole nation, not merely of the working-classes, to the moral and spiritual value of education would be the very best thing for our country. I don't know anything more likely to insure unity; and unity is what we want to make a success of democracy. I am irritated by stupidity: I am afraid of ignorance. No system of education can render us the service we most stand in need of which does not aim at the development of the whole man—body, mind, and spirit. And in my opinion every child has a right to such an education."

III

MATERIALISM IN LEEDS

IT is perhaps essential to an understanding of the views expressed by this frank revolutionist that the reader should have at least some idea of his physical appearance and some feeling as to his manner. I shall therefore endeavour to produce upon the reader's mind by means of a sketch something of the impression which this formidable person made upon mine.

He is a tallish, clean-shaven, delicate, and attenuated man of middle years. His face expresses no emotion, and his voice betrays no feeling. Save for a look of cultivated contempt at the corners of his mouth, his long, pale, monotonous face is almost without vitality. He wears spectacles, and his eyes, which are of a Japanese character, appear to be blinking at the world with a cold and immemorial disdain, watchful only to repel a kindness or to rebuff a courtesy. It is a face which begins with a short forehead, lengthens a very little at the nose, and then descends to a rather lugubrious length, the greater part of it lying in a pale mass from the end of the nose to the end of the chin. His head is covered by fine hair of a darkish colour which he parts on one side.

As to his manner, nothing I am sure could be more unsympathetic. One feels that his first purpose is to be offensive. He seems to practise a deliberate rude-

ness. I think he suspects the ordinary courtesies and regards anything in the nature of pleasant manners as an affront to his common sense. To have to say "Thank you" appears to cost him an effort: to be gracious he would certainly find impossible.

All his actions are slow, tired, bored. When his pipe goes out it is only after some minutes of puffing at the ashes, and then with an obvious effort, that he leans laboriously forward to the table and reaches for a match. He gives one the feeling of a man who has never done anything in life except to complain.

To watch him as he sits in slouching fashion smoking his old pipe, one thin leg crossed tightly over the other, the thin arms folded over his breast, one hand lazily raised to hold the blackened briar, the head stooped on his chest, the lips just parting at every few seconds to emit a brief cloudlet of smoke; and to listen to his harsh and bitter views of life uttered in a slow and measured Doric, every "r" rolled with a deliberating richness and every syllable given its utmost quality, this is to feel that here is a mind so positively convinced of cynicism, so satisfied with bitterness, so unshakenly mournful, so incurably persuaded of the misery and futility of existence, that it has become dehumanised and mechanical.

This is, of course, merely the impression made by his appearance and manner. I have no means of judging what is the inward reality of the man; something said to me by a friend of his, whose appearance made a quite opposite impression on my mind, leads me to think that behind his mask of cynical materialism he hides qualities of a really fine and noble nature. But his manner is unlovely, and to a stranger

at least he speaks only as a materialist proud of his logic.

He told me very little of his life, and that in a most grudging fashion, preferring to talk about the revolution, to which he and his friends are looking forward with the greatest confidence. But the little that he did tell me witnesses to a certain amount of suffering in his past, and suggested that he has never quite got over the memories of those early years.

With little or no education he was sent as a child into a mill, and a little later got into the building trade and began to associate with men of a rough nature before his mind was alert or his character trained. As he grew older he began to feel a cynical admiration for his lodging-house mates, who lived a more or less gypsy existence, and mocked at the respectabilities of their more industrious fellow-workmen.

"These lodging-house fellows," he said, "have a philosophy of life which is really worth any sensible man's attention. I got fond of them and liked to listen to what they were saying. They're an awfully interesting set of fellows. They don't believe in anybody or anything. They don't work more than they can help. They make a mock of philanthropic employers, and look upon all parsons as either fools or humbugs. The world, they say, is out to rob you, and if you don't keep your eyes open and rob it right and left you'll be done in the end. They take all the pleasures they can get. They cheat their sweating employers at every turn. And when they've got enough money for a day or two they lie in bed and smoke their pipes."

I suggested that there is at least some loss in this philosophy.

"What loss?" he inquired. "They certainly make one sacrifice, and it's a real credit to them. They renounce marriage, because they have a kind feeling towards women and children and don't want to drag any woman into such a home as their wages could keep going; and certainly they don't want to bring any children into this rotten world."

I spoke of the loss of literature and art in such a life.

He smiled bitterly. "I find I can do all right without either of them," he said. "I don't mind poetry if it's simple and sensible, but most of it seems to me a lot of tosh."

I mentioned Wordsworth.

"Oh, I can't stand him!"—this with a quite supreme disdain.

"Browning, perhaps?"

"I don't understand what he's driving at. No; I'm not in love with literature. It's just a hobby and nothing else. It isn't life; it's merely one of the toys. As for art, I've got a contempt for it."

I was puzzled by this, for I knew that he had taken an even considerable part in working for the education of his class.

"A good deal of tosh," he said, "is written about education. Haldane's view, for example, that it is a bridge from one class to another, is rot. We don't want our children to remove from one class to another. We want them to stay where they are. A lot of people take Haldane's view of education, that it's a kind of fire-escape from the working classes—a part

of Smiles's Self-Help. We don't care a button for that sort of thing. We don't want our children to get out of their class. We want them to stay in it. We despise the other classes. We've no use for them. But the old gang doesn't understand the change. No one has interpreted the new spirit in the Labour movement."

I told him that he misunderstood Lord Haldane's view. I said that it was a view which aimed at lifting up and transforming the different classes into one solid community of intelligence. It aimed to do away with all idea of class and to make intelligence the only test of reward and honour.

He listened impatiently; and I thought it characteristic of him that while he loved to express his own opinions he refused to entertain the opinions of anybody else; and then he proceeded to speak as follows:

"There's a new spirit in the world of Labour, and it has not yet been interpreted. I sometimes read what Sidney Webb says; it makes me smile. He's awfully old-fashioned, as old-fashioned as most of the Labour Members now in Parliament. London is a very stupid place. It seems to dish a man's brains Look at the London newspapers!—did you ever read such stuff in your life; Fancy intelligent people being taken in with muck like that! Nobody in London knows what is going on in the real England. Nobody there has the brains to understand what is taking place up here. The new spirit has never been interpreted. Somebody is wanted to interpret it. Sidney Webb won't do it. Arthur Henderson and his crowd won't do it. Here it is waiting to be interpreted, but the interpreter hasn't yet come along."

I asked him to be himself the interpreter of this new spirit—at least to me.

He took a little time to respond to my invitation, but after a few moments of beating about the bush he began to speak and gradually waxed eloquent on his theme.

"It's very difficult to do so, awfully difficult," he made answer; "for you see you have to be a workman to understand it. You have to be a workman to feel what the realisation means that the classes have governed us for centuries with real cruelty and the most frightful stupidity. But roughly, it's a spirit that aims at a Marxian upset of the existing order. Quite frankly, it's a revolutionary movement. I don't mean by this that the men who are urged by the new spirit will use force to get their ends; but I do mean that they're determined to upset the present order of things. This new spirit is profoundly sceptical, a bit cynical perhaps, and awfully in earnest. It's a spirit born of disillusion and a sense of betrayal. It doesn't believe in the old Labour gang. It feels that the Labour movement is much bigger than the Trade Unionist movement. It wants working-class solidarity for working-class aims. Wages are the immediate interest: a few shillings extra means an awful lot to a workman; but it's not wages, not shorter hours, not better housing, not education, and all that kind of thing, which is the driving force. The driving force is the workman's conviction that he can run things far better than those who call themselves the governing classes. And the aim is a working-class world, founded on equality, with the four main things

of industry socialised, and room left everywhere for the play of individual character.

"War," he continued, "has shaken Labour out of its old habits of thought. We might have gone on for another twenty-five years in the same rut, but War has made men susceptible to revolutionary propaganda. The new spirit is a new attitude of mind to the economic problem and to society in general. Before the War working-men had some sort of sneaking respect for the intelligence of other classes. That's gone for ever. The War has killed it. We say to ourselves that the governing classes got us into this War, and having got us into the mess haven't wit enough to get us out of it. What are we to think of such people? What's the value of their brains? Have they managed this thing well or badly? Are they conducting the War successfully and are they leading us to victory and peace, or to worse muddling and into greater debt? We've got a contempt for the other classes. And that's the central thing in the new spirit. Instead of class hatred, we now feel class contempt. Hatred's a wasteful emotion. Contempt is a strengthening force. We've got a contempt for the other classes because they're found out, because they're exposed as humbugs, and because we know very well that our class would never have made such a mess of things as they have made.

"Another thing about this new spirit is its contempt for London. You've no idea how we laugh at London. We know its power, its power to take an honest man and convert him into a rogue. We watch our own Labour men go up to London and become traitors to their class. Nine out of every ten men

who have betrayed the working-classes have had jobs in London. London has that power. It steals a man's soul out of his body. But in everything else it is just contemptible. Look at the fools in Whitehall! How they bungle things, how they stick to red tape! Why, it's laughable. The government of the country is in the hands of a lot of second-rate clerks who've got no ideas in their heads and can't move an inch outside the bounds of tradition. All the cities know how London is muddling local government and holding the country back. You'll find Tories and Liberals talking about it all over the North. London is the great humbug among the cities of England. And it's our chief enemy because it's the centre of government."

"What do you propose to do?"

"The revolutionists are out to do away with all centralisation. They don't want the nationalisation of things; they want their socialisation. There's a difference. We believe in municipal socialism. Certain of the big things we would surely socialise in the national sense; but chiefly our main aim is to make every city independent and self-contained. This is one of the greatest of the changes which War has produced in the mind of Labour. We are as dead against centralisation as we are against bureaucracy."

I spoke about the value of civic patriotism, and the work waiting to be done in the matter of housing, public gardens, universities, theatres, and the rest.

He said that he attached little importance to these matters. People could do very well with the houses which exist at present; he himself had lived for

years in a back-to-back house and was as comfortable there as he would have been anywhere else.

I asked him if he attached no importance to the value of beauty, and suggested that Leeds, on other grounds very justly famous, was a city which had not perhaps paid as much attention to this matter as would have been good for its salvation.

He told me frankly that these ideas did not interest him. He thinks that a good deal of time is wasted in this direction. Beauty is a relative term. One man likes this and another man that. "If I like a bad picture, it's a good picture so far as I'm concerned. Besides, what does it matter?"

I said to him, "What are the big things that you would socialise?"

He replied, "There are four of them."

"What are they?"

"Well, to begin with, there's Land; we shall certainly nationalise that. Then there's Transport, the railways and canals; they must belong to the State. And then there are Minerals; we don't intend to let any private person exploit the mineral wealth of the country: that wealth belongs to the community."

After a pause of some length, I reminded him that he had spoken of four big things.

He seemed unwilling to tell me what the fourth thing was which he intended to nationalise, but at last he came out with it, watching me, I thought, with some curiosity to see the effect of it upon my mind.

"The fourth thing," he said, "is Finance."

I replied, "If you get that of course you get everything."

"Exactly."

"But can you get it?"

"Why not?"

"It's rather a complicated matter, isn't it?"

"We thought so, too, before the War."

"And now the War has taught you that Capital is Credit?"

"Exactly."

"But what is Credit?"

"The power of the workman to produce."

"Isn't it more than that?"

He shook his head.

"Surely it is the confidence of the financier in the relations existing between employer and employed?"

"There's no need of financiers. A State creates its own Credit. Look what we're spending in war. Is there any difficulty in getting five or six millions a day? A State can manufacture as much Credit as it requires. We shan't want financiers to help us in the new State. The State itself will be the national banker."

"Then you would socialise industry?"

"Everything except the retail trade. We shouldn't bother about that. Of course you understand what is the main thing we're out to destroy. It's the conception of Profit as the object of trade. To shatter this idea is to revolutionise the social system. Everything in our propaganda leads up to this mark. We're going to destroy Profit as the basis of work. The system of life devised by the governing classes, and still kept going, is a system which regards millions of men, women, and children as nothing more than the tools of the moneymaker. They exist simply that he may make money quickly. Their only means of sub-

sistence is to work for him. And his only purpose in life is to make money: he exploits these people, and he exploits the community in his own selfish interests. The thing's illogical. If the State is against the War Profiteer why shouldn't it be against the Peace Profiteer? What's the difference between them? The whole idea of profit-making is immoral and illogical. We're going to destroy it. And the destruction of Profiteering is the social revolution."

"Well, it's a great undertaking."

"Don't think I'm trying to deceive you," he said. "I don't pretend that this new spirit is general, even up here in the North. It isn't general at all. The mass of working-men don't bother their heads about politics, small blame to them either. They're just content to grub along, with their football, or their rabbits, or their public-house, for recreation. But this new spirit is active among the few who think, and a thinking minority can always make the mass do what it wants. Up here in Yorkshire you'll find this spirit in every thinking workman you come across. He won't tell you much perhaps, because he doesn't talk easily to strangers, but you'll find out quick enough that he isn't a Sidney Webb or an Arthur Henderson. You'll find this same spirit in Lancashire, but softer. Up here it's hard, because the breed is pure; we have been English and nothing but Yorkshire English for centuries. In Lancashire they're a bit mixed, and you'll find the revolutionary movement there less aggressive; but it's the same spirit. The social revolution has got to come. We've made up our minds to it."

This new spirit, he told me, had its rise so far as Yorkshire is concerned, in the work of a few religious ministers on circuit. But there's not much religion left now. The new spirit is sceptical and indifferent. Religion isn't big enough for it. Some of the Yorkshiremen who are now taking the lead in Labour say that they couldn't find elbow-room in the churches. They tried, but the churches suffocated them. They find room for all their aspirations in this new Labour movement. "You can breathe in this new movement. It's practical. And it's big."

"Do you anticipate any convulsion?" I asked him.

"Our people will not use force unless they're driven to it. There shouldn't be any need for it. We've only got to vote solid to get what we want. It's awfully easy, really."

"And so this revolution is really at hand?"

"It has begun already. The shop-steward movement is the first step."

"Do you find people," I asked, "willing to listen to you?"

"They'll listen willingly enough to a moral appeal. Socialists who come here from London and talk a lot of tosh about free love and community houses soon go away with their tails between their legs. There's no county in England where the old domestic ties hold so firmly as here in Yorkshire. I tell these poetic Socialists from London that there's only one way in which they can help the Yorkshire woman, and that's to get rid of her washing day. No, we don't want to listen to any twaddle of that kind. Our appeal is addressed to people's moral nature, and it's an appeal for a better and a happier life. Higher wages is the

immediate interest, and every shilling added to a workman's wages, as I said just now, makes an awful difference on the Saturday. But what we're out for is a better life than the rotten life which bureaucracy has given us so far. We know that the life we're condemned to live now is unfair, we know it's cruel, we know it's a failure. When we appeal to our class on those lines we are sure of a hearing. They know we're speaking the truth."

He said that he would give me an example of the Yorkshireman's responsiveness to a moral appeal.

"Some time ago," he said, "Fisher came to Bradford to speak about his Education Bill. They took the biggest hall in the place for him, and then began to fear that they wouldn't fill it. So they got some cards printed, headed with the words, 'Come and Help Your Children,' inviting people to attend the meeting. Those cards were distributed in the schools, the children being told to carry them home to their parents. Well, the result was a packed hall, with hundreds of people turned away. But when Fisher started to speak, and they gave him a rousing reception, he made his appeal to the employers, appealing to these kind gentlemen to be self-sacrificing enough to let the children out of their factories in order that they might be decently educated. The audience listened in silence and came away indignant. They were awfully indignant. If he had appealed to *them*, appealed to them to make a sacrifice of the wages earned by their children in order that those children might have an equal chance with the children of the rich, they would have cheered themselves hoarse."

Throughout my conversations with this interesting man I found myself thinking of that passage in Matthew Arnold's essay on Equality, already quoted, in which he speaks of the class of Englishman in the seventeenth century which entered the prison of Puritanism, and had the key turned upon its spirit there for two hundred years:—"They did not know, good and earnest people as they were, that to the building up of human life there belong all these other powers also—the power of intellect and knowledge, the power of beauty, the power of social life and manners . . . . they created a type of life and manners, of which they themselves indeed are slow to recognise the faults, but which is fatally condemned by its hideousness, its immense ennui, and against which the instinct of self-preservation in humanity rebels."

Logical or illogical, worthy or unworthy, as the opinions of this Leeds revolutionist may be, is not their most serious element the manner in which they are expressed—a manner of self-satisfaction, of antagonism, of hardness, of unimaginative materialism? Is it not much more against this manner than against the ideals themselves that the instinct of self-preservation in humanity rebels?

In another of his essays, Arnold says:—"George Sand was a woman, with a woman's ideas of gentleness, 'of the charm of good manners,' as essential to civilisation. She has somewhere spoken admirably of the variety and balance of forces which go to make up true civilisation; 'certain forces of weakness, docility, attractiveness, suavity, are here just as real forces as forces of vigour, encroachment,

violence, or brutality.' Yes, as *real* forces, although Prince Bismarck cannot see it; because human nature requires them . . . ."

But in judging this outspoken and cynical revolutionist, let us reflect upon the conditions which have operated to shape his mind and give him his particular attitude towards life. That is really the important matter for us who are "lovers of man's perfection." The first of these conditions is the extreme inequality which exists in this country between the various classes. There is something so selfish and so wanton in this separation that any man of a severely logical mind in the depressed classes must feel in his heart the pressure of antagonism towards the prosperous—those luxurious ones whom his labour enriches and who live in selfish isolation from the great mass of national suffering. Then there is the equal selfishness of the cultured. Little or no effort is made by those who enjoy the luxury of learning to share this great possession with the multitudes. There is indeed a greater willingness among the rich to share their riches with the poor than among the cultured to share their knowledge with the ignorant. One is not conscious in Leeds, in spite of its great and honourable reputation in the intellectual life of the country, in spite of its historic medical school, its great university, its religious activity, and its enlightened journalism, of any widespread enthusiasm for sharing culture among the community. If this Leeds revolutionist is hard, is not a similar hardness discernible towards him on the part of those of his fellow-citizens who use their culture only for their own enjoyment? Surely there would now be no bitterness in his mind,

and no deadness towards beauty and social manners, if for the last thirty years there had been some great spiritual ideal governing the life of Leeds, uniting all classes in a common effort to render human existence there in that black city of prosperous industrialism desirable and gracious.

This man, more than the gentle and charming idealists I met among working-men in other parts of industrial England, made me feel how urgent is our need in this country for a new attitude towards education. I have no fear of revolution. I am convinced that our English Bolsheviks, noisy as they are, and on occasions mischievous, have no real power to exert a dangerous violence or to precipitate a state of anarchy. But the finer and nobler traditions of English existence must remain in grave danger until the harsh, illogical, and immoral inequality which now governs our social life is entirely destroyed.

Education can alone give us equality, which George Sand calls "the goal of man and the law of the future"; but this education must be something much more than a convenience for commerce or a rung in the ladder of respectability. Until we rescue it from these miserable and vulgar notions of our utilitarians we are in danger. And do we deserve, allowing such notions to rule our national life, to be out of danger?

IV

IDEALISM IN BIRMINGHAM

ON either side of the kitchen fire there are shelves reaching to the ceiling, every shelf filled with books. A green curtain hangs over the entrance to the scullery. A piano stands against one of the walls. This bright kitchen, with its neat furniture and its simple hangings, has a feeling of cultivated refinement.

After tea my host and I turned our chairs round to the fire, while his wife and daughter, making as little noise as possible, washed up the cups and saucers behind the green curtain. By the window sat the eldest son, a bright little boy some ten years of age, his elbow on the arm of his chair, his hand supporting his face, one foot crooked up under the thigh of the other leg, reading hard, reading as if it rather hurt. On the hearth, playing vigorously with a meek and self-sacrificing kitten, was the youngest of the family, a rotund and exorbitant babe just beginning to speak, and full of enthusiasm for human existence.

My host sat at the corner of the table, on which he rested an elbow, the hand of that arm raised to hold the bowl of his pipe, his eyes looking straight before him to the glow of the fire. He is one of those inward-living men who are rather shy in conversation, whose faces flush every now and then in discussion, as though to speak were in the nature of an indelicacy,

and who keep their gaze on anything but the faces of those with whom they are talking. He is a man of medium height, with a pale skin, fair hair, and light-coloured eyes. The face is of a singular beauty. It has that look of extreme delicacy and sweetness which can proceed only from exceeding gentleness of spirit. He looks like a poet or a musician who is in love with his art. The hair is thick, grows straight up from the forehead, and is worn long, but without carelessness; the brow is broad and noble; the nose straight and refined; the lips expressive of tenderness; the chin deep, full, and curving a little forward.

He speaks in a low voice, very diffidently, the words well chosen and few. The nervous smile which breaks frequently into his discourse is strangely boyish. When it seems to him that he has spoken too confidently, the pale face flushes, the eyelids blink self-consciously, and he shifts about in his chair with an obvious repentance.

This young workman, who is a Ruskinian and a Christian Socialist, has qualities of the soul which make a very profound impression. To come into his presence from the streets of Birmingham is as if one went into fifth-century Athens straight from Fifth Avenue, New York. He is one of those who have listened to the Delphic oracle, and whose earnestness is now restrained, whose idealism is patient, and whose spirit is gentle.

We talked about the War, the dreadful horror of it, and about the way to a Peace that would be enduring. While he spoke of these things, the child on the hearth, now tired of the kitten, stood at my side, his scrap-book resting across my knee, pointing

excitedly to the gaudy pictures contained in this book, little pictures out of packets of cigarettes, exclaiming, "Look, King George!—look, a gun—a big gun! —look, a tank!—look, a soldier!" Over the head of this martial infant I watched the pale face of the Ruskinian, and listened to his words of peace. And as I listened there came to me the quiet sounds of the good mother and the pretty daughter washing up the tea-things behind the green curtain.

"I think the only way to a lasting peace," he said, taking the pipe from his mouth, but still keeping his eyes on the kitchen fire, "is through the international trade movement. If that movement is strong enough there will be no war. I hope that in any peace negotiations which may come there will be a strong Labour representation. Really, of course, the Labour interest ought to be more powerfully represented than any other. That is the chief interest of humanity. What hope is there for the world if peace is left to soldiers and diplomatists? Humanity wants a real peace this time. The whole world is sick for peace. The Labour movement, I am sure, may play a decisive part in the conference, a part indeed which may revolutionise the whole world; but only of course if it is true to itself. The Labour movement, in its simplest form, is a moral protest against greed. The wars of the world and the sufferings of democracy have the same origin. It is greed. The spirit of greed is anti-social and unworthy of human beings. There is a danger that this spirit may creep into the Trade Union movement, and if so that movement will be harmful. To accomplish its mission, which is almost the greatest in the world, the Trade Union

movement must be religious. It must have spiritual ideals, not economic goals. It must get humanity back to the old Greek ideal that a man's activities should embrace the whole of life. Its protest against commercialism should be founded on this great ideal. Trade must not monopolise a whole life. Business is a secondary matter, unless it is a craft that lends itself to artistic feeling. Commercialism sees life simply as a matter of business. Everything in a man's mind, even a man's soul, is to be sacrificed to this one end. If the Trade Union movement restricts itself to questions of wages and conditions it will miss the mark; what this industrial age needs is a challenge, a challenge from religion. It's a case of, What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Life must be made to mean something far more beautiful and worthy than commercialism would make it."

He said that at the present time there are two forces at work in the world making for collision and conflict. One of these forces operates in the political sphere and is making towards democracy. The other operates in the industrial sphere and is making towards autocracy. He thinks that whatever class is in power, while this conflict continues, the tendency will be towards some form of tyranny. It is necessary that the two fields, the political and the economic, should be considered as one.

To this end he would like to see all organisations devoted, as a first consideration, to the development of man's soul. Nothing should be endured, in a State founded on justice and freedom, which is injurious to the soul of man. Nothing should be suffered in the

national life which is not working for the growth of spiritual nature.

The great way to effect this change, after it is generally perceived that man is a person the loss of whose soul cannot be compensated for by any amount of wealth, is to find a common interest for every individual. This interest, he says, is the National Ideal. Instead of individual selfishness as the spur of progress he would place the moral force of a great national ideal.

His censure does not fall on Capital alone. The greed of Capital is a crime against the State which he condemns, but he condemns equally the universal tendency of Labour to give as little as possible out of its skill and toil. He points out how this spirit on the part of Labour hurts the poor.

In 1885, a bricklayer, in plain walling, laid from 1,200 to 1,500 bricks a day. In 1912 this had fallen to 500 or 600 a day, and in 1914-15 it had fallen as low as 450 a day.

In 1885, nine-inch walling cost 8½d. per yard; in 1912, 1s. 9d. a yard. In 1885, 20,000 square yards cost £708 6s. 8d.; in 1912, £1,750.

By this means the labourer has to pay more rent for his cottage.

There will always be this collision, to the injury of the masses, so long as there is no sense of national responsibility, no feeling of brotherhood, no common National Ideal. Individualism of this kind can never give us the better world for which we all profess to be striving. There must be an entirely new principle at work.

What is that principle?

It is the principle of socialism, the principle which makes every man feel himself to be an essential part of a brotherhood, whose prosperity is his prosperity, whose glory is his glory, and whose shame is his shame. Unless this principle is accepted in the State, individualism in the capitalist, and individualism in the worker will continue to produce distress and chaos

The whole question for him stands in the moral sphere. If it is considered morally right for the capitalist to get as much profit out of industry as he can, if the investor does nothing wrong when he seeks the highest interest for his money apart from all moral considerations, then it cannot be considered wrong for the workman to give as little of his labour as he can for as high wages as he is able to get.

Bring both these forces on to the same field—the force of organisation or direction, and the force of labour; bring them on to the moral ground where all forms of selfishness and greed are seen to be morally bad, and you get them into a unity which alone can give harmony to the State and progress to the soul of man.

Nothing can be done, he thinks, so long as economics are divorced from religion. Directly you lose sight of man as a person, directly you cease to think of man as a living soul, you find yourself in a wilderness of confusion, from which no intellectual adjustments or political compromises can ever serve to find the way out.

See the individual man as a person, recognise the citizen as a brother spirit, and at once it becomes clear to you that the only reasonable life is that which makes provision for every man to work his utmost, conscious

that by his work he is helping all and developing his own spiritual life.

His censure of industrial civilisation has its rise solely in his moral nature, and is entirely free from bitterness or exaggeration. He looks at life rather wistfully, seeing how disfigured and dehumanised it is growing, and feeling in his soul how beautiful and gracious it might so easily become. He is not, in any popular sense of the word, a politician : his reason convinces him that there is no political remedy for the ills of humanity : he is persuaded that no good of any real and lasting character can come to the world which does not proceed from a new attitude towards life in the heart of the individual man.

There was something almost sorrowful in his voice and eyes as he spoke of the world's infatuation for mechanical remedies. It seems to me that he is troubled by the thought that even the wisest of these remedies, which may get rid of much physical distress, must tend more and more in the direction of materialism so long as the soul of man does not feel its cheated and thwarted divinity crying out for freedom, justice, and beauty. With him, man is a spirit; and the only way of progress is spiritual.

His expression of these ideas interested me so much that we discussed them to a late hour, and when the time came for my departure I had learned nothing at all of their genesis. I asked him, therefore, if he would make a few notes for me of his life, explaining that I wanted them to show how he had come by these opinions, and assuring him that I would faithfully preserve his anonymity. He was kind enough to consent to do this, but between the consent and the arrival

of the notes he met with an accident which laid him by and rendered all writing difficult and even painful. The narrative which follows, then, must be read with the knowledge in the reader's mind that the notes from which it is compiled were written by a sick and suffering man to whom the mere physical act of holding a pen was not easy. But in spite of this fact, the notes seem to be so admirably written and to express so exactly what one feels is necessary to a proper understanding of a man's opinions, that I shall quote them as often as possible and as fully as possible in the course of the narration.

His father claimed descent from the Huguenots—"a quiet, reflective, deeply religious man—methodical, patient, and precise." This father had lost both parents at an early age, and was brought up in London by a spinster aunt, who gave him a fairly good education at a private school in London and afterwards apprenticed him to a printer and publisher.

This man married at an early age, choosing for his wife a woman of like piety, and soon after his marriage he went with her to Halifax, Nova Scotia, in search of his fortune. They were members of the Society of Friends, with a rather stricter and more rigid inclination towards Puritanism than is now general among these worthy people.

The severity of American winters proving too much for the young wife, the husband pulled up his stakes and returned to England. They returned with an "encumbrance," in the shape of a little girl, their eldest child. They returned to find it exceedingly difficult to get any work. The young printer had

lost touch with things. Trade was not good. They had "a severe struggle to make both ends meet."

This was a period of great distress, a period of "unemployment and general unsettlement." The father spent most of his time in studying the Situations Vacant column in the daily newspaper, writing letters or calling upon advertisers, getting work at one moment and losing it at the next. The family was increasing, and it came to the mother that the best thing which could happen to them would be to shake the dust of London from off their feet and go into the country. By lucky chance a printer was wanted in Leominster, and thither went the descendant of Huguenots with his wife and family to set up life on an entirely new field.

Here the Ruskinian was born and spent the first part of his life.

His first recollections are of the country, and of rural life, for the family lived outside the town and went in for a little modest farming. They lived in a fairly large cottage surrounded by a good garden with a two-acre field attached to it. They had "plenty of fowls, ducks, one or two pigs, rabbits, pigeons, and a few sheep." The mother was most industrious, for she always had lodgers in the house, and yet managed to keep an eye on the farming while her husband was busy in the town. His wages at this time were between twenty-five and thirty shillings a week. But because all the members of the family worked hard, each one having his allotted task in the field or the garden, the family seems to have kept head above water and to have enjoyed its country life.

The one troublesome day to the Ruskinian was Sunday, for his parents being strict Sabbatarians observed that day with an iron discipline. The father, rather than drive on this holy day, would walk seven and eight miles to engage in some religious work. Throughout the week-days there were Family Prayers, the mother presiding; but on Sundays, the father being home, he took the head of the table and officiated at this rite, which was of the sternest character.

The Ruskinian says that his "earliest, most vivid, and permanent impression" came from "a beautiful mossy bank at the top of our meadow." He says that this bank is constantly recalled to him by "the odour given off at certain times of the year by places of this sort." His second memory is "the music of the wind in the trees—a great, harmonious, rising, swelling, and dying away." And his third memory is of the beauty of snow. He used to watch the falling of snow for hours; and there was one isolated spot near his home to which he used to go to gaze upon its unbroken beauty. It annoyed him, he says, "when a waggon came along or anyone walking broke the surface of the snow."

He was sent early to what was called a British School, "a fearful place, of narrow wooden seats in sloping galleries, domineering teachers, dismal bare walls, and unwholesome atmosphere." After two years of this infants' department, he passed on to the higher school where he learned to read and write, to do simple arithmetic, and also acquired "some elementary geography and some history mostly relating to wars."

Here, for the first time, he came into contact with the world. His clothes were made at home, and brought him considerable annoyance from the derision of his fellows. Then, as a good Quaker, he would not fight. The bullies of the school, finding themselves quite certain in this case of no reprisals, gave him a baddish time, and he was dubbed coward by every little whipper-snapper. But this " slight persecution," he says, soon came to an end; the persecutors discovered that " those whom they had ill-treated were willing to help them in difficulties."

He was about eight years of age at this time, and working excessively hard. He rose every morning at six to help in the house and garden, then tramped into school, and then returned to his work at home. He says of his parents that they were " exceedingly anxious that their boys should do right and well," but lacking the means to give them the educational advantages they desired for them, " they did the next best thing—equipped us with sound moral principles, which I am sorry to say in my case have not always been rigidly followed." He says that at some times, looking back on his pilgrimage, he is almost tempted to say that " life is only an experiment with environment," but this would be to forget " the prayers of my Mother, the answers to which are, I believe, being gradually fulfilled."

The struggle to live in the country proved too great, and the family moved into the town of Leominster. " Economic pressure," he says, " began to tell."

Between the age of ten and eleven he was sent out to work. He cleaned boots and knives and did other

jobs in a large house from 7.0 till 8.30 in the morning, except on Saturday when he worked all day at this house, among other things scrubbing floors of stone and wood.

His next experience of life was that of errand-boy to a cabinet-maker. Here he got what he describes as "a wide and varied experience." Later on he was properly apprenticed to another cabinet-maker in the town. "During my apprenticeship," he says, "I taught myself the rudiments of the theory of music and to become a passable player on the violin," one of his sisters, out in domestic service, lending him the money to buy the instrument. He always had a keen desire to be a great musician, if possible a performer, but "this has not been accomplished."

At the end of his apprenticeship he was a very creditable cabinet-maker, "with a thorough, all-round knowledge of the craft." But this, he says, did not satisfy him. "I desired to know more; to sketch, to design, to make working drawings; but facilities for acquiring this knowledge were not within my reach. My wages were one shilling per week for the first year, rising a shilling a year until my indentures expired."

He says, "I have often thought what a tremendous sacrifice my parents made in giving me this opportunity. I was not studious, with the exception of music, and would not, or could not, read, although often exhorted by my Mother to do so; she used to warn me that some day I should regret not taking her advice, a prophecy which came true."

As soon as he was out of his appenticeship he went to Birmingham in search of work. All he pos-

sessed in the world was ten shillings, a few clothes, and his fiddle. "I had in my possession," he says, "several letters of introduction and recommendations to influential people, which I never made use of, and destroyed, not that I despised the spirit that prompted the action, but that I believed the principle was wrong." He determined to fare as his fellows, to trust entirely to his own skill as a craftsman, and he was fortunate enough to get employment.

His capital of ten shillings was paid over to a landlady in advance for a week's lodging.

The thing that most struck him at this time was "the great change in environment—the quite different outlook of men I came in contact with from those I had left behind." And he was also struck by "the great contrast between the domestic system of industry under which he had been trained and the factory system of Birmingham, with what appeared to me as horrible accompaniments."

It was this mechanical system, with its soul-destroying effects and its horrible accompaniments, which first turned his thoughts in the direction of social questions. He joined his trade union and felt himself stimulated by the companionship of labour to interest his mind in industrial questions.

He spent the next few years in this study, "trying to understand the complexity of various points of view," attending meetings of the Secular Society, the Labour Church, and even the Spiritualists, mixing freely with men in public-houses, going to theatres and music-halls.

His study of life by this means brought him to the conviction that so far he had discovered nothing which

promised a remedy for social evils. "I was looking for something, and some inward feeling told me I could not find it along any of these channels." Everywhere he went he found "lack of sincerity, rule of the demagogue and the purse"; he felt the hopelessness of these agencies.

Even in his trade union meetings he found the rule of the demagogue. "I did not know then what 'demagogue' meant; but I soon discovered that the man who could talk well, even regardless of what he said, usually carried the meeting with him. I felt this ought not to be. I asked myself the question, Why was it?"

He made another discovery—"that the men who held positions as foremen and managers were usually bullies, and held their positions on this account, not because of their worth." Vaguely he felt that this question had something to do with the other, the question of the demagogue. "Was the demagogue who governed in so many spheres only another kind of bully, and was the bully in the factory only another form of the demagogue?"

With these questions teasing his mind he came to a conclusion. "Knowledge was the key to the problem. I was on the look out for this, much in the spirit of Micawber." But, "how in the limited time left over after that spent in getting a living could this be acquired?" That was the problem which pressed upon him.

Eventually the opportunity "turned up." The Workers' Educational Association "sent a missionary to our trade union meeting, asking for students to

come along and get understanding; this was the thing I had been looking for; I signed up at once."

Of one of the lecturers, an economist, he says: "He taught me there was as great a thing as knowledge, and that was human sympathy. I well remember how with tears in his eyes he corrected a very bitter essay which I had written."

Two nights a week he attended a technical school to improve himself in his craft; two nights a week he attended the W.E.A. classes in Birmingham University; "all this meant hard reading, and home work such as essay writing and drawing; the whole of my leisure time was taken up with these tasks."

Among the authors who most influenced his ideas were Ruskin and Carlyle—he was impressed in particular by the essay, "Until This Last." He also studied Pater, who fed the natural Greek tendencies in his mind, and perhaps corrected some of the rather doubtful teachings of Carlyle. Also he read Dickens, Kingsley, Tom Paine, Brailsford, and G. D. H. Cole —"the last two on the political and industrial side."

In the midst of this labour he had the bad fortune to fall out of work. "A period of unemployment," he says, "knocks all the study out of one, especially when one has the responsibility of a wife and family. No one knows except by experience the degrading influence of the fear of insecurity—much more might be said here, but I leave it at that."

I remember his reply when I congratulated him on his home. "Yes," he said, smiling quietly, "it is quite a nice house. There are only two drawbacks One is, that not being able to keep two fires going in winter, the only room for study is the kitchen; and the

other, that one never knows from week to week how long it may be before one is out of work and so unable to pay the rent."

To go on with his narrative: a revival of trade brought him employment, and once more he continued his studies. But a year had gone by in slackness and despair. However, he plunged once more into his labours, working with an increased earnestness, and was soon warned by nature that the stress was too great for him. His eyes began to give out—" no disease, but worn out and tired; only rest and glasses could put them right." He was obliged to give up something. The choice lay between the technical school, which promised him the position of a foreman or an instructor, and the W.E.A., which promised him nothing but illumination. He gave up the technical school. " It was the right course. To have given up the W.E.A., and continued at the technical school would have surely meant greater material benefit, but the value of spiritual things had a greater appeal. Many times I have been tempted to accept positions of material advancement by the call of the 'Get On Or Get Out' trumpets; but I know now that it is just as an ordinary workman, living in the ordinary circumstances of life, sharing the ordinary joys and sorrows of your fellows, and showing the light, and living up to that which is in you in the ordinary walks of life, that the best work can be done, work which will bear the richest fruit."

All this time the main stream of his soul was towards Christ—towards that divine Person, towards a spiritual interpretation of life. He found chaos and hopelessness wherever else he looked. It was

only in Christ that he could see perfect beauty, perfect goodness, perfect truth.

He says of his religion: "I was brought up in the Society of Friends, and my sympathies are still strongest towards them to-day. In all probability I shall get back to them or the Anglican Church." It was his love of music which carried him away from the Friends and still keeps him in another of the churches. On joining this church he was struck "with the difference between the kind of people I came into contact with." The members of the choir, at any rate, "were not nearly so sincere as the Friends I had left. I missed the true reverence. I am afraid we become more absorbed with the mere ornament and trappings." He attributes to this lack of "the true reverence" the failure of the churches "to cope with the real needs of society." But he has found that "if one desires to worship, it can be performed in any company; some conditions, it may be, are more conducive than others—but this possibly applies only temperamentally."

He knows what men mean by charging religion with failure to help Labour even in its purely moral demands. "I have passed through this same period; but I came to this—the great failure of the labour movement is that it has not made its basis fundamentally religious. It is not that religion has failed us; it is because we have never had the courage or the desire to give it a trial." He is increasingly convinced of this truth, particularly at this time, "when failure is being heaped upon failure as the result of a materialistic conception of life."

He sees how this has arisen: "Labour has had a hard fight and a severe struggle for its material existence, and it has come to look upon means as ends."

That is the tragedy. Neither religion nor statecraft has ever been inspired by the Greek patriotism of the City State. Labour has had to fight for its bone. No class has aided it, no church championed it, no party come to its rescue. We cannot find in English history after its beautiful dawn and its first sense of the brotherhood, any feeling of the community, any realisation of democracy. Labour has had to arm itself against enemies. It had to insure against unemployment and sickness, had to provide money for its scanty holidays, had to combine against the autocratic mastership of capital. Always it has felt itself opposed by the rest of the community. Always it has been conscious of a sense of injustice.

"The old order," says this Birmingham idealist, "must be changed. Not, How much can I get out of the community? but, How much can I put into it, or give to it?—remembering that the greatest gift or the greatest sacrifice one can make is life"—this, he says, is the only hope we possess. "Democracy will not be led into its own by great leaders. It will arrive when each one of us becomes great and noble by developing the best that is within us, and sharing each with each the best that we have and know to the utmost limit."

This man, who might very easily have risen in the social scale, has chosen to remain a workman (refusing all advancement and promotion) because he believes that it is only in its simplicity that

life can be of service to mankind. I have never met a more real, a more unaffected and beautiful humility. He cherishes in his soul the great hope that man is turning away from materialism, which can only mislead him, to spirituality, which alone can give him peace. He tells me that whatever scheme he may formulate for a better ordering of human life he is always brought up against the one insistent fact that before all other things a change of heart is necessary. "Of course," he says, "the kind of system is important, but it is not all-important. It is chiefly in trying to find a way out of our difficulties that I have been driven back upon what I believe to be fundamental principles."

These fundamental principles are no other than the thesis of Christ. We are to seek the good of others, not our own vanities: we are to obey the law of love, not the law of self: we are to be humble, not proud: merciful, not selfish: we are to look for the kingdom of heaven within us, not in our possessions: we are to love God with all our being, we are to love our fellow-men as ourselves. These are the fundamental principles of the Social State. And without them, Democracy must remain a chaos.

V

A FIGHT FOR LIFE

ONE of the saddest stories I ever listened to, and one of the most sordid and inhuman, was told to me one night by a member of Parliament who is now approaching his seventieth year, and yet has so young and vigorous an appearance, a manner so kind and cheerful, that one might well think he had never known anything in his journey through life but good fortune and happiness.

It is a curious experience of mine that men who have suffered frightful horrors in childhood, and who have been depressed for years by an extreme of deprivation never complain with anything like so bitter a judgment of society as those younger men of their own class who share their political views, but who have never experienced real hardships of any kind.

There are marks in the face of this short and sturdy Lancashire man which tell one plainly enough how deeply he has suffered. Indeed, in repose these marks of suffering are apt to take on a look of great bitterness. But so high a courage fought its way through this terrific suffering, and so profound a happiness has come to him in his victory, that these marks are really nothing more than honourable scars of a battle that was well worth the fighting. They belong to the past. He himself, the man who has won through, is as radiantly happy and as kindly minded as any politician

I have ever encountered. Indeed, when his eyes light up with laughter one thinks of that charming phrase of Richter's, "his face is a thanksgiving for his former life and a love-letter to all mankind."

This man never had a book in his hand till he was nineteen, and at seventeen could neither read nor write.

"I was born," he told me, "in one of the most curious houses you ever saw in your life. It had neither front door nor back door. It stood in a little dark court and the entry to it was a doorless porch. You turned in at this porch and there was our kitchen. I've often thought about that old house. It was very small, and as there were six of us in family it seemed smaller still. But its size wasn't its worst fault. I have no memories of that home which are not black ones."

I asked him to tell me about those days.

"Both my parents were illiterate," he replied, "and while my mother was a saint my father was nothing short of a monster. That seems a hard thing to say about one's father. But it's the truth. What's the use of mincing words over things of that kind? I've come to think that it's a false shame which tries to hide them. Isn't it far better, for the sake of those who come after that a man should speak the naked truth about these things, and try by his experience, by his contribution to the truth of life, to make the world better for other people?"

I agreed, and he told me about his father with a dispassion which made his narrative extraordinarily affecting.

"My father didn't care whether we grew up wild beasts," he told me. "Our lives were nothing more to him than an inconvenience. He had one passion in his life, and only one, the passion for drink. To get drink there was no violence he wouldn't do, and in drink there was no brutality he wouldn't practice. He was tall and powerful, with a tremendous temper which seemed to come out of him like the flames of a furnace. And yet, as I'll tell you in a minute, one of my brothers dared to stand up to him, and pommelled him, and knocked him down, and took him by the throat. Perhaps the kindest thing I can say about my father is this, that he was *nowt*. That's our Lancashire phrase. He was no good to anybody, least of all to himself. He was so fallen, so sunken, so debased, so degraded, that one doesn't think of him as a man. He was just nowt."

"But he meant a great deal to you in childhood," I said.

"Ah, you're right there. He meant terror. He meant starvation. And he meant bruises, blood, smarting flesh, and aching bones. We slept five in a bed, a rope-bed—that is to say instead of the ordinary wire-mattress our bed had rope strung across from side to side, rope which we felt through the clothes and which occasionally broke a. d let us down with a crack. Well, I've known my father come home at night —ah, many a time—and just because he was angry about something pluck the clothes off us, take us by the hair, the skin, or our clothing, and fling us against the walls one after another, himself lying down on the bed and occupying the whole of it for the rest of the night. I've been sent to the pub again and again by

my poor mother to beg a penny from him, and that penny would buy a supper for five of us—just a little thin gruel. He was drinking his money away, and we were starving. When I think of what my mother suffered, I feel as if I could never forgive my father. What she must have endured! It wasn't only the starvation, the contempt he shewed her, and his general neglect of her; it wasn't only this; it was his positive cruelty. He'd beat her frightfully. He'd beat her with his fists. Yes, and he'd kick her. I've known him kick her about the legs till they were streaming with blood. It's hard to think of it now; it was terrible to see it. As I told you, one of my brothers couldn't stand seeing it. I'll tell you about it.

"This brother of mine, he must have been about seventeen or eighteen at the time, told me that he was going to put a stop to all this tyranny. I tried to dissuade him. I knew what must happen. But he was strong and he was passionate, his blood was up, and he wouldn't listen to me. So one night he waits for my father. My father came stumbling along from the pub. Out steps my brother and says to him, 'Father, it's you or me for it.' My father was sober in a moment. He up with his fist, but, before he could strike, my brother lands him a blow in the mouth, springs at his throat as he staggers back, and then bears him down on the ground. Once he had got him down, lying flat on his back, my brother punished him with a fury that had been getting up steam ever since babyhood. And as he hit again and again, he kept telling my father what it was for, pouring out his wrath and anger in bitter words. My

mother's name rang through all his words, again and again. Ah, that was a terrible occasion. I watched the fight from a distance, trembling all over, and knowing too well how it must end. I don't want to tell you about the end. I'll only say that my father got up off his back to go home and give my poor mother the worst beating that ever she had endured at his hands. It was the worst day's work my brother ever did for us. But don't let's talk of it."

He flung off the memory of that frightful night and began to tell me about his own battle for existence.

"I was sent to work when I was little more than seven years of age," he told me; "to be accurate, seven years and three months. To show you what a child I was, I used to be afraid, coming back in the dark from the works, of a ghost we nippers really thought existed in our shabby streets. If we wanted to frighten one another, we'd say, 'Jinny Green-Teeth will have you!' I was always afraid of Jinny Green-Teeth coming round a corner. But I had to go to work, and I had to come home by myself. And on the way home, such a babe was I, I really thought that Jinny Green-Teeth would spring out at me and carry me off, goodness knows where. My wages were half-a-crown a week. I need not tell you that my father demanded this half-crown every week. I worked from morning to night to get him half-a-crown's worth of drink. That was how my childhood went. From the age of seven I worked in a factory and lived in a home that was nothing but destitution and depravity. At that time I wasn't worth a bundle of rags. My condition couldn't have been worse. I

was starved, I was sore with beatings, I was all but naked, I was dropping with exhaustion from long hours of work, and I knew of nothing in life that was not either degraded or miserable. That was my childhood."

I found it difficult to listen to this terrible recital, and asked him to tell me of the change in his fortunes.

"How did you manage to escape from all this?" I asked him.

"Ah," he exclaimed with a brightening face, "now I come to the sweetness of life. And it is sweet, man's life, isn't it? Ah, it is that. It's worth a fight, I reckon, and as soon as I knew how sweet it could be I made a fight for mine. Mind you, my situation was pretty desperate. It needed a fight to save my life from destruction."

"Tell me of that fight."

"It began," said he, "in a remarkable way; well, perhaps I ought rather to say in a funny way. It began by my hearing a speech delivered from the hustings of our town by Lord Stanley. Afterwards he was Lord Derby—a very decent man. I was seventeen years of age. Remember, I could neither read nor write. Remember, too, that I knew nothing of the world except what I could learn from my home and the factory in which I worked. What was I then? —little more than a savage. Well, I stood on the edge of the crowd and listened to Lord Stanley. What he was talking about I didn't know. Why people were cheering I couldn't have told you. All that I was aware of was just the man himself, standing there so easily, looking so nice, and speaking so beautifully. It was his speech that caught me. I was just as if

someone had mesmerised me. I was spellbound, really I was. And when he came to an end and I walked away, why, it was in a regular daze. Do you see what had happened to me? It was a revelation of life. I knew for the first time that our way of living was a wrong way. I knew for the first time that there was a better way. And when I came out of my daze I made up my mind in an instant that I'd *fight*, cost what it might; yes, that I'd fight for my life."

He spoke about this new stirring in his soul to a companion, and this companion, who was literate, explained to him that if he wanted to get on in the world he must first of all acquire the art of reading and writing.

"I shall never forget the effect produced upon my mind when this mate of mine showed me one day the letters J, A, M, E, S and explained to me that they stood for James. It gave me the most extraordinary pleasure. I kept looking at the word, and I kept saying to myself J, A, M, E, S is James. Why, it was like music to me! I got hold of every scrap of newspaper I could find, learnt my letters, spelt out words, and began at last to understand short sentences. I used to read all the advertisements on hoardings, all the labels on bottles and jars in shop-windows, all the names on carts, in fact everything I could see without paying for. Yes; it's a fact, that as soon as it dawned on me what words meant I picked up every scrap of paper I saw lying in the street and studied it as if it were magic. Oh, the sweetness of life to me from that moment! I began to know for the first time that there is something in the world worth living for, and I began to get that something with all the energy I

could muster. It's not too much to say that I had stepped from a world of darkness into a world of light."

It was not until he was nineteen that he got hold of a book, and his joy in this possession he assures me was indescribable. Not all the words he has learned since those days, and that means fifty years of word gathering, can express the exquisite beatings of pleasure which throbbed through his soul as he handled his first book.

He joined a Mutual Improvement Society, and made the acquaintance of a Nonconformist minister who manifested a friendly interest in his career.

"You can't imagine," he said, "what it was for me to go from all the——well, all the destitution and degradation of our home to the wonder of this gentleman's house. What a sight for my eyes was his library! And when he got to know me better he made me free of that library. Ah, life was worth living then, I can tell you."

"Was that your first experience of religion?"

"My very first."

"Do you mean that till this meeting with the minister you had no notion of religion at all?"

"Well, we had a dim idea of a God, and that was all. Mother used to say something about Him. I can remember how we children used to lie on the old rope-bed comforting one another, feeling that it was our lot to know nothing but work and misery, and never thinking for a moment that this God took any interest in our welfare. Certainly we never felt angry with Him. He didn't seem to belong to us. We were nothing to Him, and our lot was work and

misery. I don't remember that we ever talked about Him, and so I should say we never thought about Him."

"What effect did the minister have on you in this respect?"

"The very greatest. He came to figure in my mind as a representative of God. Ah, he was so kind, so understanding, so noble, and so gentle. I can remember as if it was only yesterday the feeling that entered my mind when he made me conscious of God as a living Power. It was a feeling that I can describe only with the word soothing. This thought of God soothed me. I had been rather lonely up till then. But when it dawned on me that God lived, and loved, and was approachable, and wanted our loyalty and our service, then I felt lonely no longer. I felt able to fight for my life with a better heart, with a greater conviction of victory. I was far happier, and that happiness I never lost. The minister tried to make a parson of me. He took a pride in my learning, and encouraged me to preach. I had a real passion for preaching, and used to go about to cottage meetings, preaching in the dark homes of unhappy people. But somehow I didn't feel like being a parson. Before I was twenty-four years of age the Church offered to pay all my expenses if I would enter for the ministry; but I went on with my cottage-preaching, stuck to the factory, and gave all the rest of my time to acquiring knowledge."

"And politics?"

He laughed. "My first venture in politics," he said, "occurred when I was twenty-one years of age. There was to be a Debate in our Mutual Improve-

ment Society. The subject was Monarchy versus Republicanism. I was nominated to speak for Monarchy! And I did too. Goodness knows what I said. My knowledge of the subject couldn't have been extensive. But up I got and spoke for Monarchy. That was my first venture. It wasn't till I was thirty-one that I gave up my work in the factory and went in for public life. By that time I was a convinced and an enthusiastic Labour man. I never thought of entering Parliament. My ambition was to be of service to my town. And for nearly forty years I have served my town, loving my life, every day of it, and loving it because I've seen things change from bad to good, and because I know they're changing fast from good to better. Things are going to be a lot better. And with no quarrelling and violence. They're going to be better because all classes now understand the problem. Employers understand what Labour is after. Labour is not asking for what's unfair or impossible. Labour's asking for a rational life, for a fair share of life's happiness. Many an employer is as keen about these things as we are. I know plenty of splendid employers. I know men who think far more of the conditions of their factories and workshops than they do of their profits. Why, wherever you go you'll find employers of that kind. The whole face of things has changed since I was a boy. There's a new spirit in England, and anyone who looks can see how that spirit is working for a happier England."

"You are not afraid of the wild men?"

"Not a bit. Goodness, no! You'll always have harum-scarum fellows thinking that they can make

Utopia by thumping a tub. And a clever tub-thumper will always get an audience. But the great bulk of the working classes is clear-headed and not to be gulled. Mind you, I think that Labour has got to be aggressive. Aggression is quite right. I say to the forward spirits, Fight on by all means, fight your hardest, but if you expect to have concessions made to you by employers or by Government because you start off by saying that you are going to give them two black eyes, I think you'll be disappointed. Aggression should stop before it gets to nonsense of that kind. My advice always is, Get round a table. I say to workmen, Avoid anger, and get round a table before the rupture takes place. And I remind them of the third party to all their disputes—the general public which suffers when the rupture comes, and without whose sympathy nothing can be done. At the back of my politics is religion. I believe in the moral touch, the human touch. And I'm certain there's not a body of working men in the country which would not respond to that touch. My faith in the good sense of my class is as great as my faith in the goodness of life. There! I cannot say anything higher of my class than that, for I love life with all my soul."

When I saw how his eyes kindled in saying these words, I asked him if he sometimes reflected on what his life might have been without education.

"Many times," he replied. "But all the reflecting I do cannot answer the question. I can't imagine what life would have meant to me without books and the thirst for knowledge."

And then he added this, which I thought striking and perhaps a little pathetic:

"But the education which comes as mine came to me can never be the same as the education which begins in childhood and goes on through schooldays to the university. I am happy. I love life. And I want to go on living. But sometimes, sitting in the House of Commons, and listening to a speaker like Mr. Balfour, the feeling comes over me that I lost something in childhood which can never be made up to me, that I shall never be able to feel as I might have felt, and never be able to express myself with the grace and charm and exactness which might have been mine if the past had been different."

"Don't you think, however," I enquired, "that personality has its own limitations and that no amount of education in childhood or in after-life can enlarge those borders."

"That may be," he replied, "but every child, given a fair chance to reach out and get what the good life has to give, enjoys an advantage over the starved child which nothing can make up for in after-life. I grant you that I'm happy. I grant you that the makings of a great man aren't in me. But I'm sure of this, that I've got feelings in me which I've not got the language to express and cravings after knowledge and cravings after opportunities to be of service to my fellow-men which will never be satisfied. I'm not unhappy. I am grateful, and I'm content. But there's something in me still struggling for expression; and the past will always be dragging at my heels. However, I'm not an unhappy man. I might have been knocked out in the first round. But I made a fight of it, and whatever I am at least I'm not a broken man. That's something to be grateful for."

It is worth saying that this admirable man represents in Parliament a working-man constituency where intelligence runs pretty high, and that no-one in this great town is held in higher honour or enjoys a more loyal confidence. To the younger generation of Labour politicians he must seem old-fashioned and even conservative, but the stuff of which he is made is surely the stuff of all true greatness.

VI

THE OLD HALL-KEEPER

IT was by accident that I met him. I called at a certain building in Manchester to make acquaintance with a socialist, and the socialist failing to appear at the hour he had appointed I was invited by the hall-keeper into his room, and there we soon established a friendly understanding.

He is a man of great physical breadth, but so short as to escape dwarfishness only by a bare inch or two. His broad pale spectacled face has a kindly expression, thanks in some measure to the falling in of the gums and the projection of his round chin. In spite of a very violent life and his sixty odd years of time, his hair is as thick and brown as it was in the days of his youth. This hair sticks out over his low forehead, and the tangled eyebrows stick out over the rims of his spectacles. When he laughs, and even when he smiles, he looks like a boy of eighteen. But when he speaks from the depths of his soul, dragging up his husky voice with a laborious effort, his face assumes a look of such immemorial suffering that you might imagine him to be as old as humanity.

"Ah, man," he said to me, "I've suffered. People talk of adversity. Well, I've had my share of it. If I was to tell you all you'd never believe it. No, you'd never credit it. You'd think it was more than brain of man could endure."

He had laid his pipe on the table beside him, and was sitting forward, peering into my eyes through his spectacles, the indrawn lips working together. In the thick fingers of his right hand he held a used match with the blackened end of which he continually stabbed the palm of the left hand.

I asked him to tell me something of his early days.

"They're a scandal," he said, "a black scandal. "And," sinking his husky voice to a scarce audible whisper, "they're with me yet. I'm one of those who have to pray daily. Yes, even now! I dursen't trust myself. There's that in me that can't be trusted for twenty-four hours. I'm ashamed to say so, but so it is. Listen; I'll tell you something."

Here he came forward in his big chair and brought his face quite close to mine, searching me with his little eyes, which were shining with a sudden intensity.

"Every night of my life," he said, slowly, "before I dare to face my Master, I send my wife and children upstairs, biding by myself over the fire, and asking myself whether I am, really and truly, a better man than I used to be. Ah, but it's bitter work! I'm not the blackguard I was, that's certain; but am I getting any better, am I better at the heart? I dursen't say. I *can't* say it. I'll tell you one thing that troubles me. I can't get on with the clerical element. They don't seem to give me what I'm craving for and yet can't put a name to. I never get any fellowship except with those who've been as bad as myself. All my friends are like that—irreligious. The clerical element seems to irritate me, seems to aggravate the old man in me. And when I sit over the fire at night, screwing up my courage to say my prayers, I ask

myself why it is I can't get fellowship with the religious and why my friendships lie with the poor fellows who are full of sin. It worries me. It puzzles me. It makes me doubt whether I'm really good at the heart of me."

I told him a good man has said that the greatest of all sins is to be conscious of none.

"Ah," he exclaimed, brightening up, "I'll tell you what comforts me when I'm biding like that all by myself over the fire. It's Peter. Peter comes to me. Ah, many times. What a man he was, poor fellow, poor Peter. I'm sure of this, if it hadn't been for Peter, ah and my Master's handling of him, I should have given in long ago. But Peter's a wonderfully human man—full of the good and the bad; a rare friend for the likes of me. You see, when I first started to live a decent life, and that's more than twenty years ago, everybody doubted me. There wasn't one in the whole city had any confidence in me. Well, it was hard work. I'm an optimist till I'm knocked down. And people kept knocking me down with their doubts and sneers. I don't blame them. It was a miracle that happened to me. But after all these long years . . . . well, you'd think, wouldn't you, that they'd believe in me at last? They don't. Lord bless you, they don't. I've got no fellowship with them. It's all so cold, and hard, and set. There's no warmth, no fire, no kindness, no thankfulness. But Peter comes and takes a look at me when I'm down in the dumps despairing of myself. He seems to say to me, 'There's only One who can understand the likes of you and me.' And I look up at him, and I think of the way the Master handled

him, so gentle, so loving, and yet so strong, and I say to him, 'That's right, Peter, there's only the One.' But I have to pray, and pray hard, or I should be lost."

His father was a collier from Wales who came young to Lancashire and there married a Lancashire lass. At ten years of age my friend the hall-keeper went into a coalpit. He was uneducated and ill-nourished. He worked hard in the pit, but determined to improve his condition, feeling the need of something in his life which so far circumstances had not supplied to him.

"I used to be always wondering what was wrong with me," he said, stabbing his hand with the dead match. "There was something lacking, but I couldn't give it a name. It was as if I was trying to escape from a danger. I was always watching for a chance to break out—to get away from my own sufferings. I wanted to be a bigger man than life would let me be. Of course I was starved—starved in body, and mind, and soul. I didn't get enough to eat for any part of me. I was a little heathen. And yet I was strong and pugnacious. I was a fighter. And I was daring. I was always rustling, fighting, gambling. And then I set myself to get out of the pit. I knew there was only one way—a hard way, but I set myself to it. I went to school again. Yes, I studied, studied desperate; but at last I got a little book learning and became an engineer. It took me some time I can tell you. Ah, I worked: no mistake about that, for learning didn't come easy to me. I was twenty-five years of age then."

From this time until he was thirty-eight years of age the hall-keeper was something of a character in his native city. He was one of those men who live in a perpetual state of alcoholism. Alcohol had provided him with a way out. He was able, in his cups, to give free play to his imagination. For the most part he was a cheerful, even a humorous drunkard, the delight of his cronies, and a source of derisive pleasure to those outside that circle. He was quick with his joke, instant with his retort, and mirthful in all his narratives. But his home was a hell. The sufferings endured by his wife and children are not to be written. There were times when the genial toper of the tavern behaved in his home like a vehement monster and a merciless tyrant.

One of the checks to his ruin came from a son whom he had just thrashed with a pitiless violence. The boy looked up and inquired, " Have you finished? "

" I never had such a smack in my life! " exclaimed the hall-keeper. " I'd hit him with my fists—hit him over the head, punched him in the ribs, knocked him all over the place, and he looks up at me and asks, *Have you finished?* Oh, Lord, but how those words haunted me! You'd never believe how they stuck and clung to my mind. Isn't it strange, man, what words will do? They seem to take root in the soul. Don't they? They come alive and live with us. We can't oust them. They're growing inside us, moving about, altering the shape of things, doing things, and we can't evict them. No magistrate's order will do it. They're there for life. And they're our marching orders for the future. Ay, words are

strange things. Take some of the hymns, some of the psalms. . . ."

But he impressed upon me that the real check in his downward career came from the affectionate faith of his wife.

"That boy what I thrashed," he said, "was gassed on the Somme and since then has been wounded three times. I write to him every week. I wouldn't miss it for anything. And every time I sign myself second —second to ma. Yes, I make her sign the letter first, and I sign it second, and that's just to tell the lad that I know very well he owes everything to his mother. He understands. We've had many a talk together. Seeing my signature after ma's he'll remind himself of the past and tell himself that a man's in danger till he gives up his will to God. And that's a fact, isn't it?—he's in mortal danger. Poor lad, when he was out in France first of all he was terribly troubled about taking life. He came home and told us about it. I shall never forget it. The lad wept, wept bitterly. It was something to remember, him in his khaki, sitting by the fire, his face in his hands, the sobs shaking him. Ay, a bayonet's a terrible weapon. I sympathised with him; I remembered his words, *Have you finished?* but I told him what I thought about it from the religious standpoint, and the lad was comforted. But he'll never be one of those who take pleasure in killing, or make a joke about it. No, he's not that sort, my lad isn't."

He smiled and said, "I never write anything in my letters that isn't cheerful. I tell him all the good news I can. I don't preach either—no, nothing of that sort. But to every letter I write I add a little P.S.

after I've signed myself second to ma. I say, *Now, lad, you know your dad's principle—play up, look up, cheer up.* And that's my religion. You've got to do your duty; you can't do it if you don't look up for strength, and you can't do it with a will unless your heart's in it. It's wonderful what a laugh can do for the soul. I don't like the gloomy saint. I've got no use for him. The man that helps me is the man who's so happy he can't help laughing."

I asked him to tell me about his wife.

"But for her," he said, "I should have been ruined long ago. Sir, I can't tell you what my wife has been. I dursen't trust myself to tell you the words she has said to me. Some of them come floating back to my mind, and even now, twenty-five and thirty years afterwards, they bring the tears to my eyes." After a pause, he said: "My wife, sir, is one of those women who stake their lives on a man and never give up hoping, not when he drags them into hell. She used to tell me, ah many a time, and when I was wild with drink mind you, yes, she used to tell me that she had faith in me. 'You'll give it up one day,' she used to tell me; 'you'll turn round and walk in the opposite direction before you reach the end of your journey; I'm waiting for that,' she used to say, 'and God tells me it won't be so very long.' Ah, the comfort she has been to me! Never one word of reproach. The house kept beautiful even when I was starving her for money. The children always taught to respect me. If ever God gave an angel charge of a devil that was so in my wife's case. And yet," shaking his head doggedly, "I don't want to exaggerate. Devil is too strong. There was always a

spice of good in me. But I was a terrible man for a good woman to live with. I brought my family to starvation, to shame, and to destitution, again and again; ay, when I look back on it all it seems a miracle to me that my heart wasn't broken at the time by the sufferings I inflicted on others. What a cruel man I was! What an ungrateful man! What a foul beast I was making of myself in the eyes of those who should have been dearer to me than my own life! But, it's over. More than twenty years have gone by since my wife had her reward, seeing me kneel down with tears of joy in my eyes; yes, tears of joy, for God had been haunting me many days, and I was like one who goes with tears and heart sorrows, clamouring for release, just broken down for want of a touch from heaven. I shall never forget the joy that came to me. . . ."

All the time that he was speaking I seemed to see in the expression of his eyes the unsatisfied hunger of a spirit still starved by the past. He made me realise with a fresh distinctness that religious conversion does but touch one part of a man's nature, and that merciful as it is, merciful and miraculous, it is insufficient for the needs of humanity.

He himself, I think, is conscious of this fact, and perhaps his chief distress arises from it, however dimly he may perceive it.

" What I lacked in boyhood," he said, " was someone to take hold of me. I should never have been as bad as I was if someone had been there guiding me to a higher standard. I'm not excusing myself. I know very well that what I did was done intentional, and done because I liked doing it. But all the same

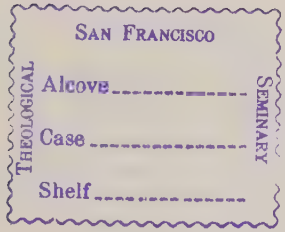
a boy doesn't slip easily into such ways. Give a boy a fair chance and he'll never be what I was. I'm pretty sure of that. And but for the love and power and grace of God, but for a miracle, for it was a miracle mind you, I might have died a drunkard's death, leaving my wife and children to the workhouse. Nothing was ever done to me in my boyhood to prevent that."

The miracle turned his face in another direction, but it did not furnish his mind with power. He was a changed man, so far as his appetites and aspirations were concerned, but in everything else the same. He had to begin at thirty-eight years of age where most of us begin at ten. It was a labour for him to acquire the least knowledge. He worked diligently, reading hard, and worrying over what he read, fighting his way to a truer understanding of life; but education could not give him that liberation of faculty in which alone the spirit can express itself with anything like true freedom.

He seems to be characteristic of the age which has just gone by: a sloven age in which the delicate mystery of human personality was left to the iron wheels of chance, in which conversion was regarded sceptically by some, as a sufficient finality by others, and in which only a few of the most enlightened of our fathers saw that education is as necessary to religion as it is to politics.

Wonderful as is the change in this old hall-keeper, he must remain, I fear, to the end of his life, consciously or unconsciously, a spirit which has been cheated of its freedom. In his frustration, fumbling with the laws of his own being and in a dark twilight

groping after the laws of nature, Peter may drop in like a friendly curate to cheer and comfort him, but even that great saint cannot take the place of the schoolmaster or give to this old pilgrim the full stature of manhood.


SAN FRANCISCO
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Alcove
Case
Shelf

VII

A MANCHESTER SOCIALIST

MY conversation with the hall-keeper was interrupted by the arrival of the Socialist.

The appearance of this workman was not prepossessing. He had come post-haste from a factory. Evidently there had been no time to wash his face and hands, to brush his hair, or to change his collar. Perhaps it was consciousness of these omissions in his toilet that gave to his manners a certain challenge which I found rather formidable.

We went upstairs to a restaurant, and after we had ordered tea, I began my efforts to appease his oppugnance by telling him of the hall-keeper. He listened with a frown clouding his brows and with an unfriendly thrusting-out of his lips.

"He told me," I said, "that his greatest comfort is the character of Peter."

"Indeed."

"It is interesting," I said, "to think that the character of Peter can act upon the psychology of an old man in Manchester nearly two thousand years after he existed."

"I can't say that Peter has been any help to me."

"Still, the fact . . ."

"Nor Christ either."

"You are not interested in . . ."

"The only man that has ever helped me is Socrates."

I was amazed.

"When I read the 'Symposium' for the first time," said the Socialist, "I knew that I had got into a new world. And when I read the 'Trial and Death,' I knew that I had got a hero for life. I want no greater hero than Socrates. I know of no idealism that is higher and nobler than his."

This Socialist is a man between thirty and forty years of age. He is as rough-looking a person as you could meet in a day's march, with an expression of face so fierce and forbidding that you might think he was a raging anarchist or a man so disgusted with life that he would commit any crime in the calendar out of sheer perversity. His heaviness of countenance is indeed extreme. I do not know when I have encountered a man who struck me as being of so scowling a disposition.

My surprise therefore at hearing him speak in this manner of Socrates was considerable, and we began our tea with an interest on my part which I did not attempt to dissemble. Gradually his disinclination to speak freely of his past gave way to a slow and careful friendliness which ended at last in something very like complete confidence.

He left school at thirteen years of age to earn six shillings a week in a cotton-printing factory. He describes himself at this time as "a good reader." Soon after he had become a wage-earner his father died, and a year had not gone past before his mother died too. He was the eldest of six children, and, as he himself

puts it, at fourteen years of age he had to plough up for the others.

"My mother's death," he said, "led to a question. The night she died we were afraid to stay in the house. We went out into the dark streets. I carried a crippled sister in one arm and gave my other hand to the smallest of the six. I remember making a vow as we crept through the night together. I vowed I'd do something so that children should never have to suffer as we were suffering then. And that led me to the question. I asked myself, Why some people have to suffer more than others?"

The parish granted them seven shillings and sixpence, so that the family income of these children was thirteen shillings and sixpence a week. But the younger children were presently taken to an orphanage, and the eldest girl went out to earn her living at thirteen years of age as a nurse.

He was a member of the Church of England and at seventeen years of age became a candidate for confirmation.

"This was something of a turning point in my life," he told me. "I had a good knowledge of Scripture, and had been fairly well taught what religion meant. But confirmation brought out a point that had escaped me, isolating it from all the rest, and making it a kind of centre of the Christian teaching. This was personal responsibility for sins. I felt it couldn't be true. And as I felt it couldn't be true I began to read what was said on the other side. That reading led to the rejection of Christianity. I gave it up from that hour."

"With what effect on your moral character?"

"None."

"None at all?"

"I daresay it was because I had charge of my brothers and sisters that it had no bad effect on my character. I felt myself responsible for them, and that held me. But the moral teaching in all the pamphlets and books I got hold of from the Rationalist Press Association helped me a lot. That teaching was all to the good."

He met at this period of his life a workman who was interested in science and economics, and who persuaded him to read the "Merry England" of Mr. Robert Blatchford. He was greatly impressed by this book, and yet, as he says, the effect of reading it was one of disgust.

"I and my mates," he said, "talked it over, and we came to the conclusion that if boys like us could see the need for social reform, our elders must see it too, and therefore their opposition was due to pure cussedness and nothing else. We became angry with society."

At eighteen years of age he left the cotton-printing factory for a foundry. "When I first went there it employed 800 men, when I left 2,400. We made the fortunes of many a master, but we had to fight, and fight hard, for every rise in our wages. We were a bitter lot, angry with the world, and full of ideas for a revolution."

He became chief clerk in this foundry at the age of twenty-five.

"I was a great reader," he told me. "Every penny I could spare went in books. I knew what I had lost in leaving school so early, and I was mad to make up

for all that lost time. I read hard. And the more I read the more firmly I came to the conclusion that the people against us were against us not from cussedness, as I had supposed, but from ignorance. Ignorance seemed to me the greatest enemy of the human race. I was determined that I would not be one of its victims. And just about that time I ran against a man in the Rochdale Guild who was an enthusiast for Ruskin. He made me excited to know what Ruskin had to say. I got all Ruskin's books I could; I read him with a real thoroughness. He came to me just in the nick of time. He prevented me from being a ranter, saved me from being a tub-thumper. But for Ruskin there's little doubt that I should have been an agitator, and nothing more."

He began to attend University Extension Lectures, became a member of the Workers' Educational Association, and read harder than ever, feeling an unquenchable thirst for knowledge, fearing always the infinite dangers of ignorance.

"Then came the luck of my life," he told me. "I met Mr. R. H. Tawney, the tutor, and through him I was introduced to the world of Greek civilisation. Mr. Tawney struck me from the first as a true and absolutely disinterested friend of the working-classes. I could give him not only my respect and my confidence, but my affection. I was a member of the first tutorial class ever formed by the Workers' Educational Association under Oxford University. It was the new-birth of my intellectual life. Oxford came to me with the wisdom of Greece in her hands, and from that moment I read Greek literature to the exclusion of almost everything else. To this day I can't get

enough books about Greece. I'm making a special study just at present of the Periclean age. Any book that deals with Pericles is more than gold to me. And I'm sure of this, that there's no understanding of our own economic conditions without knowledge of Greek history."

He told me that in 1909 he won a scholarship to Germany, and there met a number of very intelligent working-men. "I could see with my own eyes," he said, "the preparations that Germany was making for war, but some of the workmen I met told me quite frankly that their country was determined to fight us for the first place in the world. One of them used the phrase, 'We shall pounce on you.' I was much struck by the thoroughness of everything over there, and the discipline of the entire nation."

I asked him if he thought that a democratic society could ever be as thorough as a serious, earnest, and scientific autocracy.

"I'm sure of this," he replied; "democracy without education is far worse than bureaucracy as it now exists. No worse fate could befall a country than to be governed by an uneducated democracy. That means mob rule. It means, too, a lack of cohesion, disloyalty, confusion, and almost certainly a loss of freedom. It's nonsense to say that our country is a democratic country. It isn't. It's a bureaucratic country. We shan't know what democracy can do for our nation until the people are thoroughly educated, until there's an equal opportunity for every child to make the best use of his talents, until the representatives of Labour in the House of Commons are as well educated as the representatives of capital and aristo-

cracy. We've got to make democracy think before we can do anything that's real useful. And how can we make them think if they are uneducated?"

"Do you take a gloomy view of the future?"

"No; I'm not a pessimist. I have addressed thousands of meetings, and I know that the working classes are beginning to wake up out of their sleep of centuries. We are inarticulate at present; but we know very well that something is wrong, we know that something unfair is holding us back. I'm not a teetotaller on moral grounds, but I am a teetotaller. Drink is the greatest ally of the capitalist classes. People attack it because it ruins a man's home, starves his children, spreads misery and destitution. That's all right. But I begin to think that this line of attack is played out. The real evil of drink, in my opinion, is this—it stops people thinking. I'm against it as a social reformer. I know that we shall never get anything done until the working classes are thinking hard. Millions of our people are doped by drink. So long as they can get cheap alcohol they'll put up with anything. It's the worst enemy we've got."

"What is your opinion of the present representatives of Labour?"

"Oh, they're a decent set of old-fashioned people," he replied; "but of course they're not fitted for their job. They are quite untrained. Most of them are very ignorant. It would have been a tremendous gain to the Labour movement if they had attended our tutorial classes for three years."

"Do you think the better equipped representative of the future will be an out and out materialist?"

"Not if he is as educated as I hope he will be. No; it's the agitator, the tub thumper, who is like that. When a man begins to get education, he soon sees that the main thing in life is the broadening of the spirit. He looks at industrialism with very different eyes. He doesn't think only of wages. Economics is a science which no longer absorbs all his attention. He wants the biggest change of all to take place in himself. That's where our revolution has got to come. We've got to love life because it's finer than anything we ever imagined, and gets finer every fresh step we take towards understanding it a little better. I'm dead against materialism, though I've got no religion in my composition. I want to live in my spirit. I want to feel more, and to see more deeply into the truth of things. I want to enjoy my spiritual life. Take away the life of the soul—take away the books, the music, and the plays, and I don't want to live. What would life be to me without these things? Could high wages make it worth living, or better housing, or shorter hours of labour? No; not a bit of it. The Socialism of the future is not an economic revolution; it's not the Marxian idea; it's the movement of man's soul towards a more enjoyable existence through and for his reason."

I spoke of the chances of a Labour Government after the next election.

"I'm against it," he replied. "Keen as we are on the social revolution, we must creep before we can walk. One mistake on the part of Labour would be fatal. Public Opinion would turn against us, and it might be twenty years before we could regain its confidence. No; when Labour comes it must be to stay.

And Labour cannot hope to stay unless it is trained for its work. That's why I say that nothing is so important as education. It's the child now at school who is going to change the world for us, and it's the workman now attending tutorial classes who is going to lead the way."

He sank further down in his chair, and said presently, speaking in a lower tone and with deeper feeling, "Have you ever thought about the workman's fight for education? It is one of the most pathetic struggles that history has ever recorded. Think what he starts with! He leaves school between thirteen and fourteen, goes into a factory where he hears little but bad language and loose talk, works himself out in the shops, and then lags home to his supper in a crowded room. What chance has he got of developing himself? What does the State do to help him? And then at seventeen or eighteen he finds himself hungering and thirsting after something. He's no longer content with his novelette and his Sunday newspaper. He wants something that his mind can feed on. He begins to attend to what the more serious of his mates are talking about. Ah, he thinks, this is what I want—knowledge. And so he joins the Workers' Educational Association, becomes a member of a tutorial class, pays a visit to Oxford University, sees what life *can* be when the soul gets a fair chance, and sets himself to be a student. But it's not easy. Men get broken up by it. They come to it with starved minds and tired bodies. Their hours of hard reading are the few spare hours left to them after exhausting toil, toil which either exhausts the body in a physical way or numbs the whole mind by its

monotony. No; it's not easy, and many give it up. But it's worth while. The struggle is one of the finest in the world. And I'm sure of this, that everyone who does stick to it gets his reward."

He told me that his own modest library contains a hundred pounds' worth of books, some of which represent weeks of self-sacrifice.

I inquired about his present occupation. He told me what it was, dwelling upon its soullessness, its long hours, and its entire lack of opportunity. He spoke with marked bitterness.

"Is it decent pay?" I asked.

"No," he said, decisively; "it's indecent."

As to the future of politics in this country, he would begin by socialising such general things as the land, railways, and electrical power. Like almost every young socialist I have met on my travels, he is dead against centralisation, believing rather in municipal socialism. But his mind is set more than anything else upon such changes in our present system as will liberate the mind of man and give it a fuller and wider existence.

What puzzles him is the deadness of other classes to the wisdom and justice of such changes.

VIII

THE TWO COVENTRYS

HE was born in one of the slums of old Coventry, and his father, a skilled watchmaker, plied his trade before a big window in the attic, through which the daylight managed to struggle between chimney-pots on the opposite houses.

This watchmaker had a romantic turn of mind, a taking appearance, and a manner that some people regarded as above his station. He was what jealous people term "superior." Such was this superiority that it managed to captivate a young lady of distinction, who was a companion of George Eliot, and whose father was the original of Mr. Lyon in "Felix Holt." Her marriage to the Coventry watchmaker was a scandal to the family, from which it never wholly recovered.

She was at that time a remarkable person, and at the present day she is, I am assured, a most beautiful old lady, well over eighty years of age, but writing long letters in a fine feminine hand from Australia, where she lives with one of her sons, to those of her family still clinging to England. But her marriage turned out to be an experience from which most women would recoil with horror. For the romantic young watchmaker, working excessively hard to earn money for his beautiful wife, suddenly collapsed at his bench in the attic and was carried to his bed with

brain fever. He was then four-and-twenty. Two years after he was a paralytic, subject to fits, and quite incapable of earning wages.

"When father broke down," the son tells me, who is now a city coucillor, "mother did for us. She, who had never been used to earning bread, turned-to and worked for us with such courage and such tenderness as no words can express. She is the best woman that ever breathed. I say that with conviction. No woman, I'm certain, could have done more than she did. When I look back and think how she toiled, and remember how sweet she was, how kind, how helpful, and encouraging, never complaining, never grumbling, always looking on the bright side of things, always doing everything she could to give her children right ideas and a proper self-respect, I realise what a wonderful mother she was, and how much we all owe to her. Of course it was a hard time for us. She did her best; but what could you expect with seven children to scratch for and a husband useless as a log? We suffered a good bit. There's no denying that we went short. I suppose we were very often as near absolute destitution as decent folk can get. But mother was always there, like the presence of an angel.

"When I was nine years of age, times being bad in the silk trade, which was mother's trade, we went to Preston, and I was taken on in a cotton mill. I remember being marched before the doctor for examination, to see if I was fit for such work. I was a poor, weedy, half-starved little beggar, and he said he couldn't pass me. I burst out crying! I wanted to work, I wanted to earn wages to help at home, and

I didn't care a snap about losing education and play-time. I just wanted work. I can see the doctor looking at me as I stood crying. 'Never mind, Tommy,' he said, writing out a certificate for me, 'but it's a damned shame.' And of course so it was. A cotton mill in those days was pretty bad for a strong man's health, and there was I, nine years of age, weak, emaciated, sickly, with no other place to go to for a bit of work. It *was* a damned shame; but it was life —life as the working-classes knew it fifty years ago.

"It was at Preston I began to find my feet in another world, the world of reading and education There was an old parson in the town named Shepherd, an old Orangeman he was; and this good old fellow used to have a few lads at his house, reading to them, teaching them, helping them to form good habits. I got among those lads. We were a lively lot. They used to call us Shepherd's Lambs, and out in the streets we used to form up and march off to fight any of the Irish Nationalists we could find knocking around. But I, being delicate, took more kindly to the idea of reading, and I soon found myself getting such happiness out of books as I did not believe existed in the world. Those books were novels. Old Mr. Shepherd used to let me help myself from his shelves, and I found my way to novelists like Dickens, and later on to Kingsley. It's quite impossible to say what those novels meant to me. They were certainly my first steps on a road hitherto undreamt of, a road of enchantment. I don't like to think what I might have grown to be in that cotton mill but for those novels.

"It was a hardish life. I got up every morning at 4.30. For three years I worked in the factory from 6 till 1; then at school from 2 to 5. From twelve years of age to fourteen, I worked full time, no more schooling; and after that we all moved back to Coventry. I was glad to get home; I was fond of Coventry, and I'm fond of her still. I got work in a dreadful hole, a cotton factory, but it was a rotten affair, and I left it to become the errand boy in a textile factory. Here I managed to get on, and life became a little less difficult.

"The second move in my intellectual life came at this period. Coventry was a small place in those days; you were more conscious of a corporate life, everybody seemed to know everybody else. Men who felt in themselves a desire for improvement would meet and talk things over. You'd find groups of men talking together about things in general. In this way we started a Mutual Improvement Society. I had always been interested in self-improvement. I suppose I got it from my mother; at any rate, I can't remember the time when I didn't feel a desire to keep my brain on the move. Reading was a regular passion with me. Directly work was over I got a book in my hand. I didn't want to talk. I just wanted to sit still and read. Our little Mutual Improvement Society gave me another idea. I began to think politically. That meant reading politically. And as soon as that started, I saw visions! Radicalism didn't content me then. I saw bigger things than Radicalism dreamed of. I shall never forget the effect made upon me by Henry George's 'Progress and Poverty.' That shook me up altogether. I be-

came a regular disciple. I wrote to him early in the eighties and asked him if he would come and address a meeting in Coventry. He said he would. I was almost beside myself with excitement! I wrote to old Joseph Arch, a youngish man then, and asked him to take the chair. He consented, and I thought I had now made certain of a great awakening for Coventry. But when the evening came, there were only thirty-five people in the audience. Lord, how ashamed I was! I remember apologising to Henry George, hot with anger against my ignorant native city. And I remember his reply. He said to me that it was one of the most encouraging meetings he had ever addressed, because the audience was composed of youths, none there being older than twenty-four. He said it was hopeless to get his ideas into the heads of middle-age. The thing to aim for was the youth of the country.

"Well, that was how my political life began. The Labour movement grew out of Mutual Improvement Societies—that is to say, out of the feeling of young men that they wanted to improve their minds. The Workers' Educational Association is carrying on the idea, with a University touch to it which is of the highest value. I see infinite possibilities of variation before we build the New Jerusalem. I remember in the 'eighties how cocksure we were about the revolution. One of the questions for debate was, 'Can Capital Last Till Nineteen Hundred?' Those who thought so were regarded as stick-in-the-muds! I'm not carried off my feet, then, by the wild men of the Labour Movement to-day who think they are going to abolish everything and set up a new order of

society. The Bolsheviks of the 'eighties, when working-people were much more ignorant and depressed, couldn't overturn society, and our Bolsehviks certainly can't do it to-day. Democracy isn't as well educated as it should be, and will be, but it's better educated than it was, and it isn't so easily caught by the tub-thumper. Of course a good tub-thumper can always get a crowd round him. There's discontent in the Labour world; it's easy to play upon that. But you won't get responsible working-men voting for the firebrand. They know better. The great thing is to spread education more and more from one end of the country to the other, and to make it easy for every child in the land, who has got the talent, to advance as far as ever he can go along the educational road.

"I don't lose my head over education, as once I did. I've had my lesson, a bitter lesson, too. One of my sons was as brilliant a boy as you'd find, and I dreamed great dreams of him. All my children are clever and have turned out well, but this boy seemed to me as if he might be anything he liked to be. And so I kept spurring him on, spurring him all the time, getting him to work early and late, longing for him to be a great man. And then one day, just before an examination, he didn't come down to breakfast; and we went up to his room and found him lying dead, with the novel 'Jude the Obscure' under his pillow and the phial that had destroyed him at his side. The poor lad feared he might fail in the examination. He thought it would disappoint me. And that novel had depressed him, wrought him into a melancholy state of mind, and so we lost him—a loss that will haunt us to the end of our days.

"It cured me of going mad over education. But I know very well that almost every political problem you can name comes back at last to a question of education. There'll never be a better world till the mass of the people are better educated. You'll never get the loyalty and the co-operation among Labour men which are essential to the full success of that movement till the people they represent—yes, and they themselves—are better educatd. I can see just as well as the wild men how much there is to do to make the State truly democratic, but I also see that we shall only make a mess of things if we attempt wholesale alterations until the people are properly educated. It isn't the machinery of life that wants altering so much as the people. We must try to improve the quality of human nature. How to do that by Act of Parliament I don't know. But to attempt to do it by education seems to me reasonable.

"I'm a thorough-going optimist. I've got good reason to be. The life of a working-man to-day is as different from what it was in my boyhood as can well be imagined. There are plenty of things that still want altering in that life, there are plenty of inequalities that want abolishing and plenty of wrongs that have got to be righted; but the old ferocious cruelty is gone — gone for ever, the old indifference to democracy has disappeared, and democracy has now become an effective power in the State. The rest lies with democracy itself. A better democracy will make a better State."

He is typical, I think, of old Coventry, that little and most beautiful town which once existed, but which now is lost in the midst of a vast industrial

city. Old Coventry, as Mr. Claridge, one of its most picturesque inhabitants, will tell you, was a kindly town, with its coaching inns, its sporting tastes, its neighbourliness, and its green fields close up to the city walls. The man whose conversation I have just written carries in his face the impress of this old Coventry, for it is a kindly and pleasant face, and he looks at you with a yeoman brightness, and speaks cheerfully, no bitterness in his mind, the whole soul of him well content with the way life has marched. I did not feel that he represented modern democracy. But I felt that he represented some of the finest qualities in English character.

Soon after this conversation I met another workman who well remembers the Coventry of old days, and whose experience of life in those days was even more bitter than his whose story has just been told. He, too, looks back to his mother with a love and gratitude which I found very affecting.

"My father was a tailor," he told me, "and my mother came of farmer stock, strange to the ways of town. My father was an out-and-out Radical, as keen as mustard, but all the same his bosom friend was a Conservative. They used to argue together, never losing their tempers, and always ending up with laughter and handshakes. I went out to work when I was eleven. I turned a loom for a weaver, and earned six shillings a week. Up to this time I had been at a Church school and picked up my letters. I was only a child when my mother died. She said on her death-bed, looking at me, 'I wouldn't have cared if I had lived long enough to see H—— old enough to get his own living'—that was me. She hated to

die leaving me so young in the world. She had been everything in life to me. She used to say to me, 'Be a man; put that in the forefront; never mind about being a gentleman, aim at being a man.' And she'd say, 'Never tell a lie; you can watch a thief, but you can't watch a liar.' She was a great moral influence. She braced up my moral nature when I was quite a kid. She made me feel the dignity of being straight, the nobility of being true and fearless. She seemed to make manhood a big thing—like an ambition. There were no little snobberies in her mind. She was all out for the full stature of the dignity of man.

"Some years afterwards my father died, and I found myself alone in the world, earning six shillings and eightpence a week. That was bad. But it was worse still when later on I fell out of work. That was hell. I got hungry. I used to go roaming about the streets like an ownerless dog—hungry, fiercely and flamingly hungry. I'd have a 'penny buster' on Monday, and another on Friday; and that was all I'd have in a week. Then one day I went off to Birmingham and offered myself to the 5th Dragoon Guards. They said I was too short. I wouldn't join the line, and so I started tramping. The sight of luxury in those days maddened me. I hated the world. My soul was filled with bitterness. I began to think of politics. Two years before this I had felt a hunger for education; I had tried to get books, but couldn't; tried to get knowledge, but couldn't. No doors were open to a boy in lodgings living on six shillings and eightpence a week. But now I became like a madman for education. I hated the world, and wanted to make war on it. How could I do that without

knowledge? Back I went to Coventry. I felt that I must get work, not so much for bread now as for books. And I got work—work that brought me in a pound a week—and six months after, so lonely was I, so wretched, so solitary and miserable, instead of getting books, I got married. I was nineteen years of age.

"I can't bear to think of those days. I was the father of three children in sixteen months, two of them twins. And the night the twins were born I was thrown out of work. You can just imagine my feelings. Ah, that was ghastly. If I came through those days, it was because of my mother's influence in my mind. I knew that I had to play the man. I knew that I must put up a fight. So instead of chucking up the sponge and going to the devil, I put all my soul into getting another job, and got it, and improved my position; and then, as if the sky had cleared for ever, I set about improving my mind. I began to read, and luckily for me I started with history. That helped me to understand.

"I became a working Liberal, and organised educational lectures. It came to me that what was wanted to put things right in the world was an educated democracy. Instead of attacking the rich, I attacked my own class—I attacked its ignorance, its apathy, its contentment. And to this day I follow the same road. There are two main objects always before my eyes, education and housing. I've no faith in anything else. Of course I'm a Trade Unionist, and I've played a public part in that movement, but outside Trade Unionism the only political ends I pursue are housing and education. Give the people better houses and

better brains, and all the other problems will solve themselves."

He expressed a like contempt for the Bolsheviks of Coventry as the other man had done, telling me that in his opinion democracy is not yet ready for responsibility. He, too, speaks of the immense improvement in the lot of the working-classes, and says that democracy can now blame only itself if it doesn't make things better than they are.

The views of these two men, who represent Old Coventry, do not commend themselves to a younger workman in the city with whom I had an interesting conversation.

This man is a very silent and reflective person, a good listener, and a bad talker, but when I had told him the opinions of these two men he found his tongue and spoke to me as follows:

"I have a great respect for those two men. They are both good men. They have done fine work for Coventry. They deserve all the gratitude they get from the citizens. But neither of them realises that his work is done and that his day is over. A new order of citizens is pressing up behind them, and the ideas of these citizens are not the ideas of Liberalism but the ideas of Socialism. We perceive that the fatal defect of our whole industrial system is its profiteering basis. We do not think of improving houses, increasing wages, shortening hours of labour, bettering factory conditions, and all that kind of thing, but rather of laying new economic foundations for an entirely new social order. Our idea is a simple one, but fundamental. It is the logical idea of the socialist principle—the idea that trade exists for men and not men

for trade. We would destroy the conditions which make capital a profit-seeking power. We would deprive capital of this power to use men and women for the purposes of selfish greed. We don't want to tinker with the constitution; we want to find a new economic basis for the social order. Now, these ideas can only commend themselves to the young, and those men to whom you have been speaking are past the time of life when new and revolutionary ideas can be received into the mind. They think that things are much better. So they are. They think that because things are better democracy should be content. But democracy is damned directly it is content. Democracy can only live by moving forwards, and moving boldly. And it is always the young men of Democracy who carry the torch of the future."

He told me of an incident in his own life which strikes me as worthy of record.

As a boy he began to work very hard with the idea of becoming an engineer. He used to go to the Free Library to get books on mathematics and engineering. He would sit in the library working at these books till his head ached, his eyes burned, and his brain seemed to reel. But he was determined to succeed, and stuck hard at this difficult study.

One night, exhausted by his labour, and unwilling to go home, he put the mathematical books back on their shelves, and then began to walk round the room looking at other volumes in the library. By some chance, he took down Emerson's "Essays." He opened the book and began to read. In a few minutes he was enchanted.

"It was because I went to Emerson straight from the brain-racking problems of mathematics that I could understand him. Boy as I was, I read him as if he had been a teller of fairy stories. I could follow his arguments with the greatest ease. And I could follow him, too, into the new world of philosophy and literature into which so suddenly he had introduced me. From that moment I became a student of philosophy and literature. I recommend anyone who finds a philosopher difficult to prepare himself for his reading by a study of some dry science."

Although this man is out of sympathy with the political ideas of the other two men, he agrees with them that one of the great necessities of the time is a better educated democracy.

I think he expresses the opinions of a powerful group in Coventry, more powerful still in the North of England, opinions which are often misrepresented by the more violent of their spokesmen who use the soap-box rather for their own aggrandisement than the progress of humanity. I found him a reasonable, deep-thinking, morally earnest, and most kindly man. I am quite certain of his selflessness.

But Lord Leverhulme has criticised to me this man's particular thesis, and it seems to me that the most intellectual socialists have not yet answered the criticism.

If the State is to be the sole employer, asks Lord Leverhulme, what becomes of the workman's freedom to dispose of his labour? Clearly he will have to go where the State sends him and do the work the State considers most urgent. Is this loss of freedom worth any advantages which may come from exchang-

ing several employers for one? What are those advantages? The workman will still be a wage-earner. If he speaks of "wage-slavery" now he will still have to speak of "wage-slavery" under the State. And it will be a worse slavery. He will have to take the wages of the State, whether he likes them or not, and if a manager or foreman annoys him he will not be able to leave for other fields of employment. He may get higher wages, but, as in the case of munitions during the war, every increase of wages will simply increase the price of the product, and as the working-classes are 90 per cent. of the community this rise in prices will counter-balance the advance in their spending capacity.

The real remedy is increased output by means of improved mechanical power. This can be achieved under the present system, with enormous advantages to the workman, and without any loss of freedom.

Socialism, in Lord Leverhulme's view, is a synonym for slavery. It means not only a loss of power on the creative side of industry, a loss of inventiveness, audacity, progress, but an absolute loss of personal freedom.[1]

[1] In the Appendix the reader will find an expression of Lord Leverhulme's views on Guild Socialism.

IX

A COLLIER'S PHILOSOPHY

THIS big man from Castleford in Yorkshire sits forward in his chair, pointing a heavy forefinger in my direction, his broad forehead ridged like a ploughed field, and addresses me with a directness which I think might be disconcerting but for a mischievous smile on his lips and so contagious a twinkle in his large eyes that it is impossible not to feel oneself in a cheerful mood.

It is this notable twinkle that saves his face from an almost iron austerity. He says of himself that he has inherited a Methodist countenance, and nothing that his brain can do in thinking in an opposite direction can alter this melancholy fact. There is a look of Abraham Lincoln about him, particularly when the smile and twinkle die away, leaving the lines in his bronzed face hard and vigorous, the little stub of beard on the chin appearing at such moments more wire-like and aggressive. But for the most part, with his hair coming forward over the broad forehead, the dark eyes shining with a twinkle, the bronzed skin, with its heavy lines, broken up by the cheerfulest of smiles, and the whole rugged and rock-like aspect of the big man that of some tremendously real spiritual significance, he gives one the impression of a hard-thinking and cheerful-hearted Englishman of this industrial age who is battling with industrial problems

in the way that all true Englishmen in all ages have fought their way forward in the field of progress.

He was born in the West of England, not very far from Bath, in the year 1866. His parents were Primitive Methodists, and his father looked after the little chapel, which was next door to them, supplying it with coal from his own cellar when funds and the thermometer were both low. The chapel-keeper was a devout Christian of a severe and rigid type, as unbending as any Puritan, and his wife, with a vein of sentimental superstition in her, was of a like mind. The collier tells me that he was "fed up with religion" by the time he was fourteen. We shall see later on how he came to regard those early years with larger eyes.

"I left school," he said, "when I was eleven years of age, able to read, and nothing more. My first job was brain-work—carrying a mortar-board at Radstock! That was my introduction to industry. Radstock was three miles away, and there I used to tramp first thing of a morning to carry a bricklayer's mortar-board; eleven years of age. Then I wanted more money, and so I went into a coalpit. Soon after that I got restless. I was about fourteen. I used to go out on the hills and look at the lights of Bath twinkling down below in the distance, just as Jude the Obscure used to look at the lights of Christminster. I had a great longing in me for the city. It seemed to me that down there in those glittering streets there was life and freedom and the chance of adventure, whereas in my village there was nothing but toil in the coalpit and religion in the home. I remember making my mother weep by getting hold of

Reynolds' Newspaper on a Sunday, and reading it in the parlour. I read it with the aid of a dictionary. I wanted to improve my mind, and so I bought a dictionary, and everything I read I read with that dictionary at my side. So there I was on that rebellious Sunday reading *Reynolds' Newspaper* in the parlour, my mother weeping in her chair, thinking that I should certainly be plunged into hell-fire for my blasphemous behaviour. The truth is I was surfeited with religion.

" We used to have some lively arguments. In those days a collier was certain of work and good wages in Wales, and it used to be a threat with the young men of the place in any altercation they might have with the old folks, ' Oh, very well, I'll go into Wales.' I used that threat many a time to my father and mother. And mind you I meant it. Wales was a great temptation. I could easily have been my own master if I'd crossed the border. However, I stuck to the pit in our village till I was seventeen, and then, sick of working underground, I went into a joiner's shop. For a matter of four years I kept at this trade, till nothing could hold me but I must go to London. I was restless. I wanted to see the world. I had a feeling that I must launch out and try my luck in the great waters. I think if I had stayed any longer at home I might have had a regular burst up.

" It was in 1887 I went to London. I shall never forget my first experience. It was the experience of a beggar. I went about asking for work, and asking for work soon comes to mean that a man feels himself a beggar. I was ready to work my fingers to the bone, I was a skilled tradesman, I was a strong and

vigorous man with a good character, but there was no work for me in London, and I had to go about like a vagabond asking, begging, for a job. I tell you, that's bitter work.

"In looking about me I saw a good deal of London. I may say I examined every nook and cranny of the city's existence. And I felt bound to own that nowhere could I see the directing hand of Providence. I felt that there was a flaw somewhere. I couldn't believe that an all-wise God had ordered things as they were. A journeyman might have made things better. The place and the people offended me, disgusted me. One day I strolled into Hyde Park and stopped to hear what a free-thinking lecturer had to say about it. He shocked me, for I still had Methodist blood in my veins; but my reason consented to his arguments. From that day I began to put God out of my mind.

"Not getting work, and my resources running low, I thought the best thing I could do was to join the police force. That was a rich experience. I soon learned the tricks of the trade. I was taken round my first beat by a bobby, who explained to me that at this pub I could get a pint of beer by knocking on the back door at such and such an hour, and that at the one over the way there was always an ounce of baccy to be found on the window-sill just before midnight. But I learnt something else on that beat. Indeed, it's a fact that I got my first introduction to literature, and so to a new life, while I was a London policeman.

"In those days there was a new kind of production in the way of estate housing, known as Hobman's if

I remember correctly, and over the front entrance of each of these houses was painted a verse or a passage from various writers, including Shakespeare, Byron, Thackeray, and Ruskin. During the light summer mornings when I was on night duty in that locality, I used either to copy out these quotations or learn them by heart, and just as one of the characters you mention in 'Broken Earthenware' got a turn to the spiritual life by the sight of a joint of roast beef on the Sunday dinner-table of a Salvationist, so I got my first turn to an intellectual life by these quotations on Hobman's Estate. They were, so to speak, my lump of beef. I remember Thackeray's words:

"'One of the most puzzling of puzzles that beset a pilgrim on the road to the goal of this life's marge is when to be thankful and what for.'

"I was puzzled in the same way at that time, and these words gave me a sort of solace. Then Ruskin's words:

"'To watch the corn grow, to draw hard breath o'er ploughshare and spade, to read, to think, to love, etcetera,' suggested to me a kind of natural basis for the highest life, apart altogether from theological sanctions, and this was new to me. While Shakespeare's 'Imperious Cæsar, dead and turned to clay, might stop a hole to keep the wind away,' suggested a thought concerning the evanescent character of greatness which was also new to me. Some of the quotations were signed King Lear, and I remember wondering who that particular king was, where he reigned, and when he lived, and it was some little time before I discovered the truth about him.

"But the bobby's life began to get on my nerves Eighteen months of it was as much as I could stand, and being by this time a married man with a growing family, I retired from the force, and went back to a more active life in Somerset. I had a year down there in the business of industrial insurance, and after that, acting on a suggestion made by a brother-in-law, I went up to Castleford in Yorkshire and once more descended a coalpit.

"But by this time the lump of beef was working. I had a regular hunger for knowledge. It's not too much to say that I was craving and famishing. How I should have gratified this hunger but for a second-hand bookshop in the town I don't know. It was this shop that kept me in Castleford. It was my chapel, my university, and my library. I used to go there on Saturday nights and talk for hours with the man who kept it. He was a character: an old collier, a real student, spectacled and grey, poking his nose into everything, and ready to argue with anybody on any subject you liked to take up. His daughter is now working with Madame Curie in Paris. She distinguished herself finely at school. I remember this old chap saying to me that a parson's library was all right for Castleford, but no use in Leeds! He was a bit of a wag, and real clever. I learned a lot talking to him on Saturday nights between those old dusty shelves. I read at this time Bellamy's 'Looking Backward,' and that gave me my first light on the political road. I seemed to see from that book that the problems which confronted us and puzzled us and drove some of us pretty near mad, were to be solved by only one thing, not by some outside Power, but

simply by human intelligence. That was real light for me, because I'd still got vestiges of the Methodist left in me, and couldn't help feeling now and again, not thinking but feeling, that God would one day put all things straight. On one occasion I saw in that little second-hand bookshop a copy of Tom Paine's 'Age of Reason.' I can remember at this moment the reluctance I felt to touch such a book. I had heard his name mentioned at home in conjunction with the devil's, and had grown to think of him as one of the wickedest men that ever lived. But looking at the book I saw certain words on the cover, and bent down to read them. They were those famous words: 'The world is my parish, every man is my brother, to do good is my religion.' That decided me. I bought the book.

"It wasn't long before it got round that I was an atheist. You've no idea of the scandal it created! Just about that time I was standing for the School Board, and the Methodists mustered their forces to defeat me, simply on the ground that I was an atheist There was a regular shindy. But I got on the board nevertheless. By this time I was a bit of a public character, active in the life of the town. We started a literary and debating society, and we used to discuss all sorts and conditions of subjects, which was very good for us. My advice to all social reformers is, Try your teeth on other people. A man's apt to think he knows everything till he comes up against someone who knows a little more. Discussion is a fine cooler for hot heads.

"I was now a socialist and an atheist, taking a more and more prominent part in the public life of the

town, and working hard at the same time to keep my family going. A large family is a great tonic. My responsibilities in that line kept me from torpor and laziness. I had to slog at it in order to keep things going. But I read hard all the same, not an easy thing after a miner's day in the pit, and the more I read the more I felt the need for greater knowledge. I used to think at one time that I could put the world to rights, but as I waded deeper and deeper into the sea of learning I lost this feeling of confidence. And yet I wanted to put the world to rights more than ever; and so I worked harder and harder to get knowledge. I heard of the Ruskin College, and that interested me. I made a study of it, and thought that now I had found the right road. My enthusiasm for education became greater than ever before. Here was the way out at last. But this must be borne in mind. I was beginning to get more and more happiness out of study. Literature was becoming a joy to me. I used to learn long passages of my favourite authors by heart, not thinking about quoting them in political speeches, but for the sheer love of their thoughts. I was getting on! And then I heard of the Workers' Educational Association.

"Now my first idea about the W.E.A. was this: that it was a device on the part of capitalistic people to take the wind out of the sails of the Ruskin College. I thought of it as an insidious attempt to destroy socialism. My hackle went up at that, every feather of it, and I made up my mind to fight this thing. I attended some of its meetings, and formed a more favourable opinion about it, and then I met

Mr. Albert Mansbridge at Letchworth, and that settled matters for me. I became an enthusiastic member of the association, losing none of my socialism, but seeing for the first time in my life that the basis of human existence is spiritual.

"I told you that I had a surfeit of religion in boyhood. That's true. But I'd like to say this, because it's only fair to my parents: narrow and puritanical as that training was, it had certain definite results in my character, good results; and after deliberation, and experience of the opposite kind of training in the industrial districts of the North, I think I prefer the training I received as a boy, reckoning it a better start in life. This may be bias. But I think it's worth consideration all the same. Judged by our standards the older generation may have been ignorant and benighted, but they were *honest*. The new generation, I sometimes think, though not so ignorant and benighted, are also certainly not so honest. Does this represent advance? I'm not sure. Isn't the true advance of humanity along moral and spiritual lines, rather than intellectual lines? Isn't it better to be a good man than a clever man? Those are questions that want answering.

"I'm enthusiastic about the W.E.A. because it sets out in my opinion to give democracy what is absolutely essential to its success—a moral basis for life. It preserves spirituality, and that's absolutely necessary. The thing I fear is a cart-wheel democracy. That's the danger. I was suspicious, as I told you, about the W.E.A. I thought they were a side-tracking organisation, instituted by those in authority to dilute to proper proportions the sincere milk of the

word. But there is one thing you cannot side-track, and that's intelligence. Fortunately, or unfortunately, you can buy it; therefore intelligence alone is not the ideal; it must be directed by a generous spirit to good ends. And that is what the W.E.A. is doing. The W.E.A. is bringing out the intelligence of men and women, and directing it to good ends, namely, the spiritual enrichment of their own lives.

"Socialism is the true gospel only so long as it's a spiritual gospel; limited to economics, it's nothing but tyranny. Take syndicalism. What is that but the old individualistic spirit persisting in community groups? It isn't socialism, it isn't comradeship, it isn't brotherhood. What socialism ought to do is to transform the old theological sanctions into the actual; it ought to give men a sense of brotherhood, to bind all the parts into a whole, and to make selfishness, not a sin against God, but a sin against the comradeship of the human race. Selfishness is the enemy. And there's as much selfishness in syndicalism as there is in capitalism. I tell you, I dread cart-wheel democracy. It's a thing that will crush the life out of the human soul. It's the ugliest and most dangerous thing that ever threatened humanity. The only way to fight it is to challenge it, to get it on to the spiritual ground and overthrow it. You must educate the people. Develop summer schools, encourage travel, give the workers change of scene, try to strike the trail for them—not your trail, but their trail. There's a great hunger in the hearts of the masses, but it's caked under, it's hard to get at, it's hard for them to understand what it is, but it's there, consuming them. It's a hunger for something different from what they know

—a hunger for more life, a greater sense of life, a deeper reason for loving life. John Hodge swanks about the high wages earned by the smelter. What are wages? What do those high wages produce at the end of forty years? Materialism can't solve these problems. Man is a spirit, and if you exhaust his body by hard physical toil so that he can't think at the end of a day's work, no amount of wages will make him a happy man. His spirit will rise up and slay you.

"Take the miner's life. Up at 4.15 on a winter's day, a two mile walk to the pit, perhaps another two miles underground to his work, then sweating toil for the rest of the day, and the walk home, dog-tired, in the evening. What has wages got to do with it? Can such a man think? Why, if he wants to keep well enough for his toil next day he must be in bed by eight o'clock. What time has he got to read, to think, to love? Isn't it Graham Wallas who says that the heavy trades make thinking almost impossible? And so they do. Just reflect on that. There are hundreds of thousands of men in the world so overborne by heavy toil that they can't think! Will wages medicine that?

"Let's get away from all these economic discussions, which lead nowhere, and look at life as a problem of man's soul. We've got to get into our minds a new way of looking at life. How can we make the modern world agreeable to the reason of man? Never mind about his house, and his wages, and his drainage system, and his rights to this that and the other thing. What about his soul? That's the point. Man has reason; he's a thinking animal;

he isn't a piece of machinery. He lives in his thoughts. The foundations of his life are moral. When once that is seen, you go on with less chance of making mistakes to consider how you can reorganise the social order. Socialism must come, but a moral and spiritual socialism. Democracy must reign, but not cart-wheel democracy. Man is a spirit, and life must be so organised that his spirit can realise itself. There for me is the future of democracy. Improve physical conditions as much as you can, that's important, but keep your eye on man's soul. He isn't a horse.

"When you're young you think of systems; as you grow older you think of the men who'll work them. I believe in the socialistic ideal more than ever, but I see the difficulty. The difficulty exists in the human factor; I don't believe you can have a socialism that's satisfactory and successful until you have greatly improved the human factor. Of course, one way of improving the human factor, as Coleridge saw, is by changing bad conditions, making the circumstances good, and that's what socialism is entitled to do and must do. I'm unfaltering on that. But I see the difficulties which confront the socialistic State. As president of our co-operative society I'm up against difficulties all the time, and they're practical difficulties that I can't evade. It's no use talking about those difficulties; I've got to solve them. Socialism will come up against difficulties of this kind if it sets its hand to anything like a revolution; and coming up against those difficulties, whatever it may do with them, it won't be able to evade them."

Throughout this conversation he was quoting

famous authors at every turn, and not merely a phrase or a line, but long passages; in one case, which I think was Morley's "Voltaire," the quotation must have run to well over a page. His memory is extraordinary. And as he quotes, as if he enjoys your amazement at this fertility, the mischievous smile at his lips becomes more michievous and the twinkle in his dark eyes dances like a flame. His mind is stored with things which give him pleasure. There is room there for the *mot* and the anecdote, room even for encyclopædic information, but chiefly it is packed with fine flourishing rhetoric from the philosophers in their moments of unction or with the glowing lines of our more posturing poets.

He is a genuinely true man, convinced in his atheistic soul that "there is no wealth but life," firm-planted in moral earnestness, that great heritage from the Puritans, and beginning to feel, I think, that the God he has rejected is not the God whom saints have adored and poets have worshipped, but only a Phantom set up in the darkness of men's minds by their own superstitions and fears In any case, education has brought him into a beautiful world where a man becomes every day more conscious of the moral law within him and the starry heavens above him, a world in which the soul has a thousand satisfactions for each day, and in which the form of the politician does not assume an overpowering significance.

"I have learned," he said, "to love life; to feel that it is good to be alive, to feel that the work of this world is sufficient, and to leave all the rest to whatever is to come. I think that every man ought to be doing

something to make life better; I think neighbourliness is one of our greatest duties and one of our simplest and most natural happinesses; and, after all, what is politics but neighbourliness on a big scale? My firmest conviction is that the true road of man's progress is education. And the older I get the more do I see that the first thing that we have to do in this matter is to get a totally new idea of education into the heads of people, particularly of working-class people."

He smiled broadly, and said to me, "Why, what do you think, many a man in the pit has growled out at me, when I've spoken of education, 'I notice it has brought thee a lot; thou'st still to work!' Now, think of that! Just think of it!"

Long after he had left me I sat thinking of the problem of our day which seems to me the most urgent: Into what channel to direct the moral earnestness of English character, that most precious of our national possessions, which has turned away from organised religion?

Is that channel to be a new social order?

X

THE MIND OF A CLERK

AT the dinner-table of a large employer of labour in the Midlands I met a young gentleman whose reverence and passion for literature struck me as unusual. It was delightful to hear him on this subject. He told me the number of volumes in his library, the exact number of books he had read, and at every moment was quoting whole passages from his favourite authors with a fluency which at least testified to the services which literature may render to the memory.

After dinner, when he was sitting in the drawing-room, he spoke rather warmly of the way in which clerks are neglected and depressed by employers of labour.

"I don't agree with you at all," said our host, who is a man of emphatic utterance, very honest and straight dealing.

"But I can prove to you——," began the young gentleman, getting up from his chair.

"I don't agree with you at all," replied our host, looking straight before him at the fire.

"Look here, sir," said the young gentleman; "I know of clerks at this very moment who are dealing with the plans of battleships, who are handling the most confidential documents, who are——"

"I don't agree with you at all."

"And these men," continued the young gentleman, working himself up, "slaving from morning to night, are paid twenty-five and thirty shillings a week! Is that fair? Is that just? What encouragement is there for a man to do his best when——"

"Now, listen," said our host; "I'll tell you my experience. The clerk is a man who takes no interest in his employer's affairs and no interest in his own improvement. He is stupid, ignorant, selfish, unserious. He goes through his day's work like a machine. His brain is filled with little snobberies. The workman is a bigger person altogether. Clerks! —why, they're the weakest part in our industrial system. How many clerks in England know a foreign language? How many of them are students of economics? How many of them take a serious interest in the trade of the country? How many of them are ambitious to become master-men? Thirty shillings a week! Well, it's generous pay for such automatons. Most of them are not worth twelve and sixpence."

The discussion which followed led the young gentleman to tell us something of his experiences in life, and this autobiography seemed to me so interesting that I asked him if he would write me a brief account of his adventures for the purpose of this book. He kindly consented, in spite of his great and pressing activities, to undertake this task, and the narrative which now follows is taken from the document he was good enough to send me:

He was born in a village public-house, four miles from a large industrial city in Yorkshire. His parents were stern and strict. They were very fond

of their children but never made any display of their affection. Discipline was the main consideration in their domestic system.

The customers at the inn were of the roughest rural description, and often " uproarious scenes took place " which filled him with disgust.

One of his experiences in childhood which seems to have awakened his mind to a rational interest in life was an attack of fever which necessitated his removal to a hospital. Here he saw for the first time " the world of human suffering and sweet sympathy." The sisters and nurses going about the wards contrasted strangely in his mind with " the drunken louts who visited the inn."

" I was touched," he says, " by the tender compassion of the sisters for the sick; by their cheery smiles and comforting expressions. I remember the fervent prayers of a father for his dying son; the anguish of a mother for her dead boy—and I longed, longed with all the ardour of my boyish soul for an outward display of affection by my parents; longed for those loving terms of endearment which bring Paradise into the heart of a child."

He proceeds to say :

" I heard stories of the city; I heard stories of other boys' homes; some boys had drunken fathers; others. sadder to relate, drunken mothers; others lived in homes animated by filial love. All these things were laying the foundation of a desire to educate myself, to understand social matters and the vast Science of Humanity. One incident in particular remains fresh in my memory. A boy from the city chided me about the vulgarity of my speech. The village vernacular

annoyed him. He said I was the roughest boy in the hospital. . . . I knocked him off a rocking-horse! "

He speaks about the education he received in those early days of his life.

" My education until I was ten consisted of five years at a village school, where I learned little more than the rudiments of football. At the inn I revelled in 'Swiss Family Robinson,' and loved to write. Once, when I lay in bed fourteen weeks, with rheumatic fever, I spent many happy hours selecting characters from the few books I had, and making them hold conversations which I copied out. Imagine Christian talking to Friday about the exploitation of new factories, which I compiled from an old prospectus; or Robinson Crusoe chatting with Daniel about lions! I remember causing my doctor to laugh heartily about one dialogue, which was composed from an old Medical Book I found. The happiest day in the year was when we children were taken to a pantomime matinée. For weeks afterwards the glitter and tinsel played havoc with my fancy, and when I grew up I intended to go on the stage. Every new experience brought a new delight, but my education was not sufficiently pronounced to enable me to comprehend many things which a boy of my age should have been able to do. Until I was eight I thought Christ was crucified every Good Friday. My parents were Church of England people, but I attended every Sunday afternoon a Primitive Methodist Sunday School. We were encouraged in religious matters, but seldom spoke about them at home.

"At the age of ten I was sent, along with my brother, to a Council School in the suburbs of the city. My father was chief clerk at the County Court, and I often walked with him into the city, on which occasions he told me of his struggle as a boy. This acted as a great incentive to spur me on, but the degradation—for thus I verily believed it—of my being put in a standard with boys two years younger than myself, and the ridicule to which I was subjected, nearly broke my heart. I was an ignoramus. How I wished I were as clever as my little classmates! Stimulated by the sweet sympathy of my elder sister—for my father and mother only advised me to 'stick it'—I worked and I read, I read and I worked, and at the end of four years I left the school with a proud heart, heading the List of Merit. My heartfelt gratitude is still going out to one master I had there, for not only did he take a personal interest in me, but instilled the idea of acquiring knowledge and using it for the realisation of some worthy ideal. The wasted years at the National School had made mine a hard task, but since the days in that fever hospital my spirit had been alive, my faculty for observation had developed."

He attended evening classes four nights a week, and read industriously in every hour of his spare time. So successful was he in this labour of self-improvement that he attracted the attention of the works' manager at the factory where he was now engaged, and was transferred to the office of this great man.

"My work now necessitated extra thought. I prepared material output charts. I learned shorthand and typewriting; I ascertained figures for a monthly

manufacturing report, but as soon as these duties were accomplished without undue trouble I became unsettled and asked for more responsible work. Having proved successful, I was selected, at the age of eighteen, to assist the private secretary to one of the Directors who was the administrative head of the firm.

"A wider field for thought now presented itself; the work was varied and of a most confidential nature. My wage was only 12s. 6d. per week, subsequently increased to 15s., and although I considered I was worth more, I looked upon what I did not get as the premium I paid for experience. When the private secretary was away I kept all the private books; dealt with letters and important tenders; and the whole of the directors' personal communications. On occasions I assisted in the preparation of agreements. To understand matters better I attended University Evening Lectures on subjects likely to prove beneficial and make me more useful. But my enthusiasm soon received a nasty bump. After a winter's course on inorganic chemistry, preparatory to the study of metallurgy, my only thanks was a remark from one of the officials to the effect that it was ridiculous for a *clerk* to waste time studying such a subject. And this after a hard task so that I might be able to comprehend the mechanical and analytical test reports with which I had to deal and become acquainted with the different classes of forgings, etc., for which I had to tender. I suppose I ought to have sat at home increasing my speed at shorthand and losing my individuality.

"Despite my disappointment at the lack of encouragement, I did my best for the firm, and my decision to stop further studies was necessitated more by the late hours I worked than spite for my nasty rebuff. Often I was there until ten and eleven o'clock at night. New plants were laid down; companies amalgamated; new companies were formed; all of which widened my knowledge and increased my duties, but I got no extra pay.

"About eighteen months later the private secretary to the director was appointed to an important position at the London office. When I knew this my happiness knew no bounds for I thought my opportunity for further advancement had arrived. But alas! my hopes were shattered and the sense of a deep injustice filled my soul. Another clerk, slightly older than myself, from another department, with no knowledge of the work but of a fairly decent family, was brought in to do what I legitimately claimed as my job. I appealed against this decision, but was told I was 'really too young for the work; too young to accept the responsibility.' I said I was willing to accept it and that I could do the work, as was proved when the other man went away. But I was told the decision was final, and that my salary should be increased to one pound per week to show that I was appreciated.

"For a young man of twenty I had had a successful career as far as the majority of young men is concerned, and my training was exceptional. I saw the inner working of vast industrial concerns; constant association with men of tact and judgment, who were

influential in the business world, had developed my reasoning faculties and quickened my sense of intuition. Life in business had strengthened my will and purpose for a greater knowledge of the business of life. During my holidays I visited different towns to study human nature and gain wisdom. I visited the slums in these towns. I visited the museums and art galleries. I tried in every way to improve my mind. I regretted a thousand times my five years at the National School in the village; these five years were leaden weights which held back comprehension, for it was only after considerable concentration that I was able thoroughly to master a problem. I am confident that had I received a better education as a child my task would have been less irksome. I envied the dissolute 'wrecks' I saw about the streets their public school education, but I resolved to get the best out of life by intellectual pursuits and make up what I had missed.

"Just before I was twenty-one a further advancement came, which marked a new epoch in my life. I left home at the request of one of the managers to become his confidential clerk in a large engineering firm in the Midlands, where he had undertaken to organise the works for the manufacture of an entirely new departure from their previous work. I went for thirty shillings per week, as the prospects were bright and sufficient to warrant the severance of home ties, and relieve my parents henceforward of any anxiety as to my welfare. For eighteen months I worked sedulously, and seldom finished business before eight o'clock at night; on two occasions I worked until four in the morning."

About this time he passed through a religious crisis. A favourite sister died, and her passing was of so pathetic a character that " it touched the stern heart of my father; it broke my mother's." As for himself he was plunged into the dark night of the soul. He lost his faith and went first to a rather loose way of life for diversion and then to his books for new light and stronger guidance.

" I read the philosophy of Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, Copernicus, Galileo, Bacon, Newton, Kant, Locke, and others, until I felt as miserable as sin. I wanted to find Peace. My state of mind at this period would have astounded the student of Psychology. While in this chaotic condition I rambled in the ' Riddle of the Universe '; and eventually flung the book aside in sheer disgust and desperation. I abandoned hope. My only comforter was Poe, strange as it seems, with his dark, dreary, desolate, despondent ' Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque.' He has described my mental anguish perfectly in the following forlorn appeal :

I stand amid the roar
Of a surf-tormented shore,
And I hold within my hand
Grains of the Golden Sand—
How few! yet how they creep
Through my fingers to the deep
While I weep! While I weep!
Oh, God! can I not grasp
Them with a tighter clasp?

Oh, God! can I not grasp
One from the pitiless wave?
Is *ALL* that we see or seem
But a dream within a dream? "

With his interest in life restored he set himself with new energy to make a career for himself. He worked exceedingly hard for an exceedingly small wage, but gradually made his way to a position of responsibility, establishing a friendship with his managing director which continues to this day.

He attributes his success entirely to his private studies. It would have been easy for him to go to the wall. It required a gigantic effort to get his head above water. No clerk, he thinks, can hope to survive the monotony of office work, or to make his way into the thinking department of a great business, who does not labour with all his might to enlarge his general knowledge, to develop his entire manhood.

The chief point he makes, and I think it worthy of attention, is that any branch of study tends to develop intellectual faculties in a manner which is of highest service even in business life. The more disinterested and pure of selfish ends that study is the better for the student quâ man of business. It gives him quickness of brain, energy of thought, power of expression, and a general intelligence. But of course he insists that the study is its own highest reward. He himself has often read the night away and gone straight from his books at six o'clock in the morning to a pressure of work at the factory.

He concludes his narrative with a brief dissertation:

"Reflecting on clerks generally, I am inclined to the view of a business Journal that 'the crying evil of the young man who enters the business world to-day is the lack of application, preparation, thoroughness; with ambition but without the willingness to struggle to gain his desired end.' Unfortunately the majority prefer worldly pleasures in their leisure moments, to intellectual enjoyment. They would rather risk half-a-crown in a football sweep, on the off-chance of drawing a winner, than delve into a second-hand bookshop and become intellectually rich for ninepence. They would rather parade a street with a pendulum monotony, than journey through the vast realms of thought to be explored in a good book! Having mastered their particular job they are heedless of the future, care little about improving their minds so as to be able to undertake further duties; hence, many fail when opportunities appear. Although they may have no direct bearing on a clerk's daily routine, intellectual studies serve to promote energy in the mind's activities; to increase the power of concentration; without which, what hope is there for the creation of new ideas? And thus it is that this looseness of leisure in the business of life reveals a looseness in the life at business, for procrastination is the father of the man of one idea.

"A master I had once discriminated clerks by pronunciation. He said there were 'clarks' and 'clirks'!

"Many employers are at fault in that they foster the habit of judging all clerks by the 'clirks.' A scale of wages, irrespective of merit, and without semblance of equity, is often imposed, with the

deplorable result that many young men who entered business with the highest of aspirations are washed by this relentless torrent of injustice into the rut of the 'clirks.'"

He concludes by telling me that his life is one of the greatest possible happiness. He says that he has a wife to share his sorrows and double his joys; an intellectual friend with whom he loves to discuss the wonder of the world and with whom he regularly exchanges essays on literary and scientific subjects; a home that is a real rest after the exhaustion of labours which War has trebled, and a spiritual security which no disaster can overthrow.

All this he attributes to his passion for literature, his craving for knowledge, and his love of observation. In a word he has an intellecutal life. "I am conscious," he says, "of a sense of happiness which beholds

> . . . . a world in a grain of sand
> And a Heaven in a wild flower."

XI

THE PASSIONATE STUDENT

THIS argumentative philosopher, stumping about the world on one leg, which has been badly broken since it lost its fellow, bears a rather notable facial resemblance to the late Earl Grey. He has the same high bald forehead, round eyes set well under the brows, small and correct features, a neat moustache, a good solid chin, and a slow smile which kindles military fire in the eyes. Bue he is fair instead of dark, and shortish instead of tall.

Curiously enough we began our conversation on the subject of Lord Grey, and this opening has a psychological value since it proves the challenging and controversial quality of the philosopher's mind.

" I've got a bone to pick with you," he said, even before he had sat down, almost as soon indeed as we had shaken hands. He flushed a little, as though he recognised the possible offence in this beginning, but continued because he could not help himself. " I've just read your book on Earl Grey. Somebody sent it to me; a gentleman in Park Lane, I think he was; someone who knew I was interested in the Co-operative movement. He asked me to read it and tell him what I thought of it. Well, I did! I wrote him pages of criticism. Why," facing me boldly, " whatever do you mean by telling a story of Lord Grey getting drunk at Cambridge and making a speech by moonlight on temperance? You don't call that a fine

thing, do you? You don't think that's something we ought to admire? You'll excuse me speaking straight out, won't you? But I'm like that. I believe in speaking straight."

I invited him to sit down.

"You believe in growth, don't you?" I inquired; "the growth of character, the development of personality?"

"Certainly." He hesitated for a moment, flushed a little, and added, "I see what you mean."

A reasonable man.

"Lord Grey," I continued, "didn't get really drunk, to begin with: he was only a little exalted. And, besides, he was a boy. It isn't how a man begins, but how he ends up, that concerns the rest of us. Don't you agree?"

The argumentative philosopher was not to be beaten so easily. He said "I see that. But then you keep on saying how much he admired beautiful women. You don't say it once; you keep on saying it. That gave me a nasty feeling. I couldn't help wishing he had been different. You don't mind my saying that? It's best to be truthful, isn't it? I didn't like the book because the man didn't seem to me a good example for others. Fine points he had; he was a remarkable man in many ways; but if he was a fellow running after other men's wives, then I don't want to have anything to do with him."

I replied that the most intimate friends of Lord Grey, including Dr. Jameson, had assured me that never once in the life of Lord Grey had there been anything in the nature of an intrigue, that his admiration for beautiful women was only an expression of a

large and general admiration for all beautiful things—the sky, the ocean, trees and flowers, horses and birds.

His face lighted up. For a moment one could almost see the argufying passion evaporate from his mind. "I'm glad to hear that," he said, with a real sound of gladness in his voice; "and I can understand it." He leaned forward in his chair. "I see now what you mean," he said in a far gentler, almost a wistful, tone of voice. "Many a time when I've been out with the wife and child, the sight of a woman's beautiful face—real beauty, I mean, and not doll's prettiness—has given me a—well, a touch of happiness, done me real good in my heart, just as it might be if I'd seen a lovely lot of flowers or a star shining in the sky. Yes; I see what you mean now." He looked at me, wondering whether he should say more, then added, "Beauty is a wonderful thing. It seems to give us something. I've never had a false thought about women all my life; that sort of thing isn't in my nature. I can't understand how a man can be a traitor to his wife; but many a time I've seen a woman's face as I went along the streets that has stirred up something in my heart that's like worship—a feeling that can't be defined, except to say that it's more like thanksgiving than anything else, and seems to do one good. It's strange that it should be so, but beauty does make a big appeal to the soul of a man."

From this interesting confession, we came to the story of his life, which he told very heartily.

"I was born in a slum," he said, "a real slum; about as bad a place as you can imagine—*iniquitous*—and that's the truth. And yet there was goodness there and kindness all round. I can remember how

often my mother used to say, 'You children must look after yourselves to-day and get your own dinner; Mrs. So-and-so is ill, and I'm going round to look after her.' Everybody seemed to be helping everybody else. There must be something fine in human nature for it to be like that in places which aren't fit for any animal. There was an old man in our slum who adopted a baby, and brought it up, and looked after it just like a mother. The child grew up into a fine boy—a beautiful little chap he was—and one day he got out into the streets and was knocked down by a motor-car. The death of the boy pretty well broke the old man's heart. It fair crushed him to the earth. But he looked round and adopted another child, not seeming as if he could live without something to love. It's wonderful what human nature can do, even in a slum. When I look back I can think of scores of people whose hearts were full of real sweetness—yes, and goodness, as well; the best kind of goodness, too —people who would sacrifice themselves for others and rather starve than do a mean or wicked thing.

"We had a pretty hard time of it in our family. There were thirteen or fourteen of us children; really I can't remember which it was. Of course some of them had to die out, my father's wages being a guinea a week, though it sometimes went to two pounds in summer. He had been an agricultural labourer, had gone to Wales, got frightened by an explosion in a mine, and came back to Berkshire, working in a brick kiln. It was hard, grinding, slogging work all the time, with thirteen or fourteen children hanging on to him. I wonder what he got out of life! I wonder what he thought of it!

"One thing I do know. He was religious. I know that for certain—because Sunday was the most horrible day in the week to us! Oh, lor, it was awful, I can tell you. Father was a Puritan—an advanced Rad and a Puritan. We knew that right enough! Of course I was a Radical, too; but I don't think I was ever much of a Puritan. I didn't take kindly to that. The Sundays cured me. Oh, lor, those were horrible days, as you can imagine—most horrible!"

"What about your education?" I asked.

"I went to the elementary school, paying twopence a week. That was a nice place, too! There aren't many schools like that left about now. A good job, too. We had a gaffer who was a regular devil. He'd catch us by the hair, drag us over the forms, kick us and punch us, and fling us into a corner. He was hot stuff, right enough. And he used to set us home lessons that lasted us up to bedtime. They didn't bother me so much, because I was quick, particularly with arithmetic; it seemed to come natural to me. But I suffered for those home lessons all the same. One of my brothers was slow, and my father used to make me do his sums for him. Next day the gaffer would say to my brother, 'Did you do these sums yourself? You couldn't do them yesterday in class, how is it they're right to-day?' And then my brother would say I had done them for him, and that meant that I copped it from the gaffer—hot! You see, they had me both ways. If I refused to do the sums at home, father whipped me; and if I did them I got licked by the gaffer. School didn't seem to me any

sort of Paradise. I was jolly glad when I'd finished with education, I can tell you."

"How old were you then?"

"Thirteen."

"What did you do?"

"I went into a biscuit factory at five bob a week."

"And never missed your education?"

"I never wanted to be back at school, but I did pretty soon begin to be sorry that I'd lost my chances of education. It's strange, but I did have a glimmering of what education meant: even in those days, kid as I was, I had a feeling that I'd lost something, that there was something I wanted which I hadn't got, and wasn't likely to get. But there was no one to help me, or to tell me what it was I wanted. I had to keep my feelings to myself. That was what I suffered from in those days—no guidance. I was always reading. Every book that came into the house, never mind what it was, I got hold of and read it from cover to cover. I must have read some pretty queer stuff in those days.

"Then a bit of luck came my way. I picked up with a decent pal. We both had the same sort of ideas, and used to go rambles together, five or six miles at a time. We'd get hold of a halfpenny paper, and then wrangle out the topics we found there. I was always fond of a wrangle. As soon as ever we started off one or another would bring up a topic, and then we'd start wrangling. It was good so far as it went, but here again what we needed was guidance. There was no one to guide us. You were what your father was. If your father was a Tory you were a Tory; if he was a Rad you were a Rad.

"I was rather a quiet chap. I used to go in for fretwork; spent most of my spare time at it, turning out some pretty intricate designs. Then I took up with photography, and went for that just as seriously. It was photography gave me my first indication of what was really stirring in me. It brought me to nature. I used to go out into the fields with my camera, not to wrangle, but to look for pictures. And that brought me face to face with beauty. It was then that worship of beauty began to dawn in me. I found I had the capacity to worship all right, but I hadn't got the language to express it. You see what chaps like me suffer from all their boyhood is want of guidance. You have to find your own way, and it isn't easy.

"At sixteen I gave up the biscuit factory, where I couldn't see any prospects, and where I was thoroughly unhappy, and went on the railway. The railway did this for me," he added, holding up his stump. He laughed and added, "The other leg, having too much work thrown on it, is apt to be troublesome. I've had a difficult time of it as regards legs! And I've not been so lucky as some with doctors. You might have thought I was the biggest criminal on earth to hear the way one of the surgeons spoke to me in the hospital. Brutal isn't the word for it. Oh, no mistake about it. My opinion of hospitals isn't so romantic as many people's. Perhaps I was unlucky. But I reckon someone ought to look into our provincial hospitals, where the poor man has to go for treatment, and see whether things couldn't be improved a bit."

I asked him if he received any compensation for the loss of this leg.

"Not a farthing! Oh, no, we had to take our chances in those days. I went into the shops. The only compensation I got was a drop in wages. I could preach a sermon on wages. People read in the newspapers of unrest in the railway world, and can't understand how working-men can be so wicked and ungrateful. Well, take my case. From the time I was twenty until I was twenty-eight my wages were fifteen shillings a week—fifteen shillings, mind you, for a full week of right down hard work. I tried to get a rise, but couldn't. I did everything a man can do to improve himself, but it was no go. I was supposed to be fortunate to get any work at all, only having one leg. As I couldn't get a rise, I said to the girl one night, explaining how things were, 'We've got to part.' Well, that pretty near broke her heart. We agreed to wait a little longer. At twenty-eight years of age they gave me seventeen shillings a week, and we got married on that."

I expressed my surprise as to how it was possible to set up house on so infamous a wage.

"Well, it took some doing!" he replied, cheerfully enough.

"To begin with, what was your rent?"

"First it was six shillings and sixpence, then it went to seven shillings."

"And you could live on the balance?"

"We had mother with us, and she had to go out and get a bit. The wife went out charing. The little girl used to come home from school to get my dinner." At this point it was as if a shadow passed across his

face : all the good humour and smiling courage vanished, leaving there nothing but great suffering and a deep anger. "I tell you," he exclaimed, between his teeth, "it hurts, it hurts like hell, to be out walking with your little girl and to hear her say, 'Dad I should like a bun,' and you haven't got a blessed halfpenny in your pocket. Life oughtn't to be like that, ought it?—not after a man has done a hard week's work."

He went back to his narrative.

"When I was about nineteen," he said, "I got hold of a copy of Blatchford's 'Merry England,' and fell clean into the net." He laughed, as a man laughs on looking back at the enthusiasms of his youth. "That book made me a fiery socialist, full of rage against society, and seemed to wake me up to a new life. But what it really did for me was to give my mind a new curiosity. I began to read politics. I got hold of Hyndman's 'England for All.' That set me thinking harder than ever. The next book that made a mark on my mind was Dickens' 'Tale of Two Cities.' I didn't read it for the tale, but for the characters; it showed me life. You see, I didn't know much of the world up to that time, and life didn't mean more to me than working hard to scrape a living. It was after reading Dickens that I got a thirst for learning. It came on me like a tiger's spring. I was mad for it. I wanted to know about life. Life was a shut door to me, and I wanted to open it. Just at that time I gripped hold of the co-operative movement, and then I read Edward Carpenter's 'Towards Democracy,' which helped me a lot. I was beginning to find my feet. I joined a

friendly society, the Oddfellows, and got the feeling of association and comradeship. At this time there came over me, and it has never quite left me, a great fear of hypocrisy and cant. It preyed on me; in a way it preys on me still. I want to be a true man, I want to keep out of my life the least shadow of pretence. It's not so easy. I see the danger of shams in the soul. What a lot of sham people there are in a town! I'm always afraid of thinking a single thought that isn't true to my heart and mind. Have you ever thought that the greatest danger to the world is the gospel of the swelled head? Look at this War. All the horror of it is due to one man with a swelled head. That one swelled head has plunged the whole world into a bath of blood. The Kaiser has been able to crucify humanity, and it all comes from the one fact that he had a swelled head. Humility's a great virtue. Every man ought to aim for that. I see the danger in myself. We're always in danger of getting a swelled head, thinking we're great men, thinking we know more than others, never sinking ourselves in the mass and losing ourselves in that. I fear hypocrisy. It frightens me. The temptation to pretend you're better than you are is tremendous. It gets hold of a man and twists him out of all likeness to humanity. We've got to be humble. We've got to get down to the dust. Socialism is the gospel of humility. It's the only gospel that challenges the gospel of the swelled head. We've got to fight against individual vanity. That's the sin, that's the crime. Instead of being proud that we're richer and grander and more successful than our fellow-men, we've got to be ashamed of it. Everything we've got

that's useful, including our talents, we ought to be willing to share with others. Any spirit but this is wrong, and gets a man, or a nation, into trouble."

His story from nineteen years of age to twenty-eight is the story of a soul fighting for its existence in the midst of a great darkness and without guidance of any kind. At the age of twenty-eight, this brave and quite splendid person, penalised in the world of industry by his one leg, and entitled as much as any soldier wounded in the war to a pension, but treated as a pauper by employment, and made to feel that it was a kindness to give him any wages at all, fought for his soul's existence in an absolute darkness, no one helping him, no one showing him the way, no one extending to him the least sympathy.

Then it suddenly flashed into his mind that what he was seeking, far more than wages, was light—light in the darkness of his mind, light to illuminate his spiritual life, light to make this difficult and cruel life of his intelligent.

He became a member of an evening school.

He was a married man, with a child very dear to him, and with his mother and his wife working hard to keep his home together, and he himself toiling from early morning to late at night, exhausting himself for a mere pittance. But because he had now found his way, and because his soul could not be discomfited by all the brutal forces of materialism, he threw himself with a passion which was surely sublime into the battle for illumination. As it happened, just at this time there was extra work on the railway, and he was kept late in the shops, working overtime, so that he would hurry away to evening

school straight from his toil, going without his tea, posting up the hill with all his might, the stump of his leg absolutely bleeding, after standing all day, and on some occasions, famished for food and exhausted by his toil, he would even fall asleep at the class.

All this he tells me with a smile in his eyes, with good-humour in his voice, with no trace of bitterness in his soul. He had found the way. At last, after much suffering and groping, he had discovered that what was wrong with the world was the darkness in his own mind. Until he could get rid of this darkness he must cease to think that he saw clearly the great world which surrounded him and treated him so cruelly. Perhaps the cruelty itself would disappear when illumination shone into his own soul and gave him the joy which he felt certain resided in knowledge.

" It's strange," he said, " all things considered, that from the very first I never had any thought of education as a way of getting on in the world. I never thought for a single moment of technical education. I didn't want diplomas and degrees—nothing of that sort. I wanted education for the pure joy of it. I knew now very well what I'd been craving for. I knew, too, how I could provide myself with happiness. And it was happiness that came to me. I couldn't get books enough, or find time enough, to satisfy me. I read every spare moment I had. I studied till I dropped asleep over my book. And all the time I kept finding the world becoming more real to me and yet more wonderful, and life becoming more beautiful than ever I had dreamed.

"I joined the Workers' Educational Association directly it got to ———, and worked away there with a fresh enthusiasm. Then a scholarship was offered for the Summer School at Balliol College, Oxford. I sat for it, and won it. It was a scholarship of thirty shillings for the week. Of course part of the money had to go to keep up the home while I was away, but the chance was too good to be missed, and off I went."

"What do you think of Oxford?"

He smiled. "That was the happiest week in my life," he replied. "It was absolutely great. I was quarrelling with professors all the time; oh, it was grand. Wrangling the whole week! I remember one night sitting up so late with the Master of Balliol College, A. L. Smith, that he had to let us out by the side door because the front one was closed. It must have been nearly midnight. And I can remember him, as we stood by the Martyrs' Statue there, patting me on the shoulder and saying, 'I admire you, but I can't agree with you!' Laugh, I should think I did. And so did he too. Oh, that week will live in my memory as long as I'm going. Education has been an absolute godsend to me, and if it had done nothing more than give me the experience of that week at Oxford I should have been grateful to it. But it's done more than that."

"You are really happy?"

"Me! I'm one of the most discontented men in the world."

"I understand."

"The more I study the sharper do I realise that there's more joy and more beauty in the world than ever I shall be able to get. And even if I could get

all the joy and beauty that I know are just out of my reach, I realise that beyond all that joy and beauty there are boundless regions, and beyond those, boundless regions again. That's one thing education does for a man, it takes away the risk of a swelled head. I tell you what I think is such a good thing in the W.E.A., and that's the personalities of the lecturers. These men, most of them young, and most of them fresh from Oxford, seem to have got the real democratic spirit; they're modern; they see the world as we see it; they know that the present system is a bad one; they're looking at all the problems from our standpoint. And there's nothing of the pedant about them, or the patron; nothing of that sort. They seem to have the same enthusiasm for learning as we have, and seem as if they want to share their learning with us, giving it away freely because it gives them pleasure to do so. Some of the lecturers of the W.E.A. are real princes of men—first-rate ability, the highest kind of scholarship, and with it all comradeship and humility. I'm certain of this: the personality of some of these men has done far more for us than their lectures. Now, that's really a fact, and it means something if you think about it."

He spoke to me with considerable feeling of Mrs. Mansbridge's part in the foundation of the W.E.A., and spoke also of the pure spirit which has animated this association and made it a spiritual blessing to thousands of the working-class.

As he spoke in this fashion I kept picturing him on those overtime nights hastening away from the workshops of the railway company, where he had been standing all day, and stumping up the steep hill

to his Evening School, late, and fearful of being more late, the perspiration streaming from his forehead, his leg bleeding, his stomach empty, there to fall asleep over his book. This is something more than to cultivate the Muses on a little porridge.

I am told by Mr. A. E. Zimmern and by Mr. R. H. Tawney, both brilliant Oxford men, that it is impossible to overstate the quality of zeal with which men and women in the W.E.A. set themselves to get learning, simply for the pure joy of it. And Sir W. H. Hadow, of the Armstrong College in Newcastle, has told me how he often receives invitations from little mining villages to go and address them on Greek literature or the life of Socrates, and how the questions that are rained upon him by the people—many of them with black faces fresh from the pit—prove that they have followed his argument with real intelligence. "I don't think," he said to me, "I could now go back to Oxford. I should feel that the clock had stopped. Among the working people of the North you can hear the movement of humanity going forward. One is really living up there."

Mr. Zimmern, author of "The Greek Commonwealth," who has an intimate acquaintance with the work of the W.E.A., pointed out to me what is perhaps its greatest value.

"Workmen," he said, "don't make friends at school, as we do. At that period they are shoved into some dirty workshop, their hand against every man and every man's hand against them. They are in the system. This happens, as I say, at a period when most of us are making friends and therefore forming social

ideas. Now the value of the W.E.A. is that it creates friendships. It is the beginning of a corporate life. Education can be overrated; its possibilities are certainly exaggerated by some people; but the association of men and women in education is of the highest importance. Education intensifies what you are. An Oxford tutorial class is a spiral staircase; you end up higher than where you were before. Extremists become more extreme, and certainly there are extremists among the students of the W.E.A. But most men aren't extremists. It is not in the nature of the Englishman to be extreme. I remember a student of a tutorial class who wanted a social revolution; he really wanted it quite badly; but at the end of the class he was working with a tremendous will for town-planning in his own district. He hadn't ceased to be a social reformer.

"There are several reforms needed in the matter of education. It ought to be much more democratic than it is. The university ought to be the centre of the national life. I am sure that all the political problems which politicians describe as 'insoluble' could be settled within the four walls of a university. For example, isn't it quite certain that in the atmosphere of a democratic university the Irish question would long ago have been settled on a federal basis? The university ought to have two principal functions. It ought to be the nation's Officers' Training Corps and it ought to be its General Staff. It ought to be a place of pure intelligence where all the problems of the State are seen in the light of knowledge and of ideals. It ought to be like the monasteries of the Middle Ages—only running water, not a stagnant pond; it

ought to be the centre of the spiritual life of the nation, a place of refreshment, a place of reflection, and a place of leadership. I think that the spirit of the W.E.A. is tending in this direction. Its great value is that it associates men and women in a common ideal, bringing them together and giving them a feeling of companionship in a work which has nothing to do either with wages or respectability."

Mr. Tawney, who went from his tutoring of democracy to the battlefields of France and there got badly wounded, told me that what is most splendid in the W.E.A. is the utter disinterestedness of its students, and what is most impressive and encouraging is the exceedingly high quality of their work.

Something of the spirit it creates may be seen in a letter which I received from the passionate student after our conversation; with that letter this chapter may fitly come to an end. It helps one, I think, to realise the sacrifices which men make for learning, and the sorrows and troubles with which they have to contend in that difficult pursuit.

Here is the letter:

"I'm afraid I left the impression upon you that I am still a member of our Tutorial Class here; if so, I must apologise and explain the reason. After I had been a student with the class for three years I met with an accident to my remaining leg. I broke it at the ankle, also just under the knee—the small bone—and twisted the foot round square with the leg, thus breaking many of the ligaments. The pain was, and is even to-day, intense; so I could not get to the class, hence my dropping out. There is in connection with this something I ought to have told you—that is, that

after trying for years to keep the wolf from the door and doing my bit, here I was faced with 12s. per week sick pay from my friendly society and a few shillings, about five, from a few workers in a small club in the workshop, with one leg off, the other now broken, and no knowing how long that would last, with a wife, a girl of sixteen just preparing for a college training, and a little boy of six years. Rent 7s. per week, sick pay to be reduced to half at 26 weeks, the little shop club nothing after the same period! Now picture it if you can; yet on the fourth day after the accident I wrote out a lecture I was booked to give the following week. The chief point is this: There was a fund *founded by Mrs. Mansbridge* at the W.E.A. Head Office called the Comradeship Fund, and from this I received—without any application or agreement of any sort—a small sum per week, sometimes smaller, sometimes larger; I don't know why the difference, I only conjecture the state of the fund. If ever I felt grateful, if ever a little help did good and cheered a fellow up, if ever there was a godsend, it was then. Of all the awful times I have passed through that was about the worst, and if ever an act of angelic kindness was performed it was done then by Mrs. Mansbridge. She did not know me then, neither did Mr. Mansbridge. We had met as ordinary individuals at meetings, &c., shook hands, parted, &c., each perhaps wondering what the other was aiming at. But at the hearing of my accident from someone they sprang to the lifeboat and both pulled together to the rescue of a comparatively unknown, obscure, common-place member of the W.E.A. like me. . . . In very truth they saved me and my family; not by the money—they had such

little funds and so many to help with it—but by letters, books, and a really marvellous tact and kindness, and human touch of fellow-feeling I had never experienced before. God grant—or any other power there may be that is ruling this universe—that they may be rewarded for that time, for I can never repay it myself. Here, too, I ought to emphasise the point I spoke of yesterday. No book on the W.E.A. can possibly be complete without recognising the love, devotion, and hard solid work put into it by Mrs. Mansbridge. While Mr. Mansbridge did the building—brick by brick—Mrs. Mansbridge was undoubtedly the cement that held the whole together. It was as a child to her—no love was too great for it, no work was too arduous or too tiring, no effort of hers was spared in any way whatsoever to make it a living, vital force in the lives of its members. It was a part of her very life."

XII

THE FOUNDER

FIGURE to yourself a young man who in the intensest moments of his conversation appears to be undecided as to whether he shall merely hit you or spring at you tiger fashion and tear you to pieces—a fair-haired, spectacled, high-shouldered young man, whose expression of face seems to you at such moments a snarl, whose attitude a crouch, and whose tone of voice an insult.

The story of this remarkable person is the most romantic narrative of my book. He is the son of a carpenter. He got his first education in a London School Board. Very few people in "the great world" have heard his name. He was, and he still is, as poor as a church mouse. And yet, so great is the thing he has accomplished, you could hardly visit a city or town in the kingdom without finding there some workman or his wife who thanks God for this man's existence. I venture to commend his story to the Hesiod of modern England.

Although he looks no more than thirty years of age, A. M. is in truth over forty. His youthfulness he owes in part to his plentiful fair hair and the pleasantness of his fair skin, but much more I think to the overflowing intensity of his spirit. He is tall, with high shoulders, stoops a good deal, stares at one menacingly through a pair of steel-rimmed spectacles,

has small and regular features, wears a little clipped boyish moustache, and has a high broad forehead full of intellectual capacity.

These details are unimportant in comparison with the young-looking gentleman's voice. This voice is the man himself. It is the spirit inside the physical vehicle " materialising " audibly to one's ears. It is not a musical, not even a pleasant, voice; it is characterised, indeed, by a certain violence which is quite incongruous with the man's thought, and which seems as if it had been cultivated, as though he had trained himself to speak in this pugilistic fashion in order to get more convincing power into his ideas than the natural voice could supply.

What most impresses one in this voice, which comes through tightly-clenched teeth, is its tremendous, hissing, almost fanatical, intensity. It is as if the whole massed weight of the broad shoulders is behind each word; as if the man's hesitancy in speech, which is sometimes very marked, arises not from the difficulty of finding the exact word (he uses words as if they were bullets or cannon balls) but rather from a gathering up of the body's strength for the purpose of putting it behind the word with a terrific propulsion so that it may pierce to the inmost citadel of your soul. And this energy is noticeable when the words are not very serious, and even when a smile suddenly breaks up the prize-fighting expression of the pale face and makes it as boyish and jolly as the face of an undergraduate who is relating a lark to sympathetic contemporaries.

The truth of the matter is that here is an idealist who does not dream; an idealist who is a man of

action, singing with confidence, rejoicing in faith, loving a fight, and irritated, almost maddened, by only one thing—apathy. He could no more content himself with dreams and hopes than he could waste precious time in verbal controversies. He wants to get things done. He knows they can be done. A lover of man's perfection, he would sweep us all off our feet and bear us far afield from our scepticisms and half-beliefs into the world of action where man is visibly growing to be an angel. We irritate him by our hesitations, our incredulities, our little feeble useless criticisms. He knows the way of salvation.

You may imagine the unwillingness of such a man to spare ten minutes for the purpose of biography. I had to fight with him for the barest skeleton of his career, going to others for the covering. He shifted in his chair; he looked at me as if he wanted to kill me. He kept breaking away from his own psychology to the psychology of the movement which he has brought into being. He was impatient with my questions. How on earth could I waste time with such trivial matters when I might be listening to a passionate history of the great movement itself.

It is his fault if my narrative has none of the intimacy which such a biography deserves; it is only the kindness and communicativeness of his friends which saves it from being a mere sermon.

As I have said, he is the son of a carpenter. This carpenter who lived in Gloucester was a man of firm and upright character, with the seriousness of the Puritan tradition in his bones, and with the hard-thinking logic of the modern Radical in his mind. The wife of this carpenter was of a like character, re-

ligious and political, with an additional quality in that she appeared to possess a certain psychical gift of second sight; " she always seemed to know what was going to happen."

Husband and wife were sturdily religious. The family consisted of four sons, and the youngest of these boys is the man of whom I am writing.

When the child was five years of age the Gloucester carpenter migrated to London and set up house for his wife and family in Battersea. A. M. tells me that his father was particular about the house, that it was the best type of a working man's home—a house of decency, respectability, seriousness, and clockwork punctuality. Both the father and the mother were absorbingly interested in the co-operative movement, and conversation at the table turned very frequently in this direction. The mother took a leading part in the local Branch of the Women's Guild. She was a woman with a fine intellect and cherished high social ideals.

In the boy's nature there was a disposition to larkiness, and although he might appear on the platform of the Women's Co-operative Guild to recite little moral poems, washed, brushed, and clean-collared for the occasion, looking we may be sure like a golden cherub in whose mouth butter would not melt, there were occasions in the Sunday School when he was turned out of doors for irrepressible and contagious vivacity.

With this joyousness went a certain swiftness of intellectual apprehension. Without much trouble to himself he made remarkable progress at school, winning all sorts of scholarships, and inspiring some of

his masters with inordinate ambitions for his future But his father decided that he must take his place in the world; and when he was just over fourteen years of age this vivacious and scholarly boy, who ought to have gone to the University, was bundled into a merchant's office in the City of London to earn a few shillings a week.

But there was now a real passion for reading in his blood; and every evening of his life, after the dull day's grind in the City, he worked hard at his books. A year or so later he became a boy clerk in the Home Civil Service. Up to this point there had been no vision in his life, no magic, no great passion filling it with enthusiasm. He was just a clever little Battersea boy, with sufficient wit to perceive that he must work hard if he wanted to get on in the world. And he did want to get on in the world, as his brothers had got on before him.

At this time, however, he experienced a psychological revolution, the nature of which, I think, is extremely interesting.

He was on a visit to Gloucester, spending his holidays in the old city of his birth, dear to him for that reason, and for certain qualities of its own; after the grey streets of the City and the narrow villadom of Battersea he found something there which refreshed his mind and sweetened his heart. It happened one afternoon that he was strolling about these old streets, feeling the spell of them, when he found himself at the door of the Cathedral. He pushed open the door, and entered. It was the hour of evensong. He stood between the great branching columns of the nave, looking towards the glittering chancel filled with the

surpliced choir, listening to the music of the organ, watching the flickering lights, and feeling in himself for the first time in his existence an immense hunger and thirst for beauty.

The majesty of the architecture, the mystery of the painted windows, the ravishment of the music, these things, with the dignity of the ritual and the persuasive peacefulness of the worship gave to his mind for the first time a sense of tradition, a sense of descending continuity, a sense of some hallowed memory haunting the progress of humanity. He felt in himself, standing there under the high roof, with all the beauty of the place before his eyes and all the gentle sounds of evensong in his ears, a great hunger and thirst for this thing, whatever it might be, this thing of beauty, this thing of history and aspiration, a hunger and thirst for it almost overwhelming in its passion.

He came out of the Cathedral "born again"—born into a new world.

At this time, like many impulsive boys, his generous mind was open to all the dazzlements of rhetoric. He laughs, looking back to those days when he sat spellbound by the mere eloquence of a preacher for whom now he has little else save criticism; but he is honest enough to confess that a certain canon of that Cathedral, by the mere flood of his words, completed in his mind the first effects of that memorable evensong. It was because of this eloquence, this mere beauty of sonorous words, that the boy came to a spiritual decision. Henceforth he would give himself heart and soul to the ancient church of his fathers. Architecture and Eloquence

were the godfather and godmother of his new existence.

Religion from this moment became the master passion of his life, and it is from religion that everything else has flowed.

On his return to London he haunted Westminster Abbey, falling a victim to the eloquence of Canon Farrar, but growing at length out of this emotionalism into a strong and spiritual enthusiasm for the preaching of Canon Gore. He was now a really passionate Churchman, convinced that all his political ideals could be realised through the spirit of Christianity.

The feeling that he had much to learn, that he was only at the beginning of life, drove him to seek out ways of acquiring knowledge. He heard of the University Extension Lectures, and began to attend them. These lectures were chiefly on science, but the lecturers were well-educated men and stimulated his desire for all kinds of knowledge. At the same time he was working as a youthful politician in the Co-operative Movement, feeling more and more, as the late Lord Grey felt, that this movement was in truth an economic expression of the Christian spirit. He says that the University Extension Movement, plus the Co-operative Movement and plus Religion, equals that which he came later on to found, namely, the Workers' Educational Association.

At eighteen years of age he was a licensed lay reader in the diocese of Rochester, still continuing his work in the Civil Service and editing a magazine in that service.

Before he was twenty he left the Civil Service and devoted himself to the business work of the Co-operative Movement.

"At this time," he said to me, laughing through his spectacles, "I had the cheek to sit for a scholarship at Oriel founded in memory of Edward Vansittart Neale. Goodness knows what my Latin and Greek were like, but I shall never forget that first visit to Oxford. It was a very beautiful experience, invaluable to me afterwards."

"Did you get in?" I asked.

"Get in!" he cried with a laugh; "of course I didn't! But what did that matter? I had seen Oxford."

Soon after this experience he had the great good fortune to meet his future wife, and from her and her father he received powerful impulses that were necessary to his work in the world.

"My wife's father," he told me, "was the finest gentleman and scholar I had ever met: he was a man who loved scholarship for its own sake. It was he who gave me what I most wanted at that time—confidence, confidence in myself. He tried to destroy my self-consciousness and to fill me with the self-destroying idea that it was my *duty* to do something for my fellow-men."

And now we come to the work of his life.

From the first days of their engagement he and his wife taught in Church Sunday Schools, and a little later he began teaching classes in connection with the Co-operative Movement.

"I can't say," he told me, "exactly when the idea of the Workers' Educational Association came into

my mind. You become an educationalist without knowing it. I can say that I began to feel early in my youth the delight of education. From that I went almost unconsciously to the greater thing—the passion for education. I remember speaking on Education at the Peterborough Co-operative Congress in the late 'nineties. I spoke of it then as a spiritual thing. I said that money was not so important. I tilted at the idea of education as a means of getting on in the world. It was quite clear in my mind at that time that education was a reaching out of the soul towards the divine. Then I read a paper at Oxford on the same theme. A critic said I aimed at the moon and hit a haystack. A few people became interested. The idea I had in my mind began to take shape. I didn't see the bigness of it at first. My wife did. It was my wife who really made the Workers' Educational Association. She cheered me on; she kept me going when there was none to help. I was teaching economics in schools under the old London Board. I and my wife at the same time were working at home at a Christian Economic Society we had formed. We talked of hardly anything else except education—education as the way of progress. Then I wrote an article for the University Extension Journal in 1903, and that was the beginning of the W.E.A."

"Holland Rose took an interest in that article, which encouraged me; but the W.E.A. began with two members, my wife and myself. We formed it, solemnly paid our subscriptions, and got to work. We both agreed that no educational scheme is worth while which can't be started on half-a-crown a week. We

didn't want a great list of patrons, a begging campaign for subscriptions: nothing of that sort. Our idea was to go about England and get working people to start branches of the association on a small scale, simply providing them with the idea and giving them some notion how to set about it. We found ourselves, you must understand, in the midst of the stirring of a vast multitude. Something was happening on all sides of us to the democracy of England. Wherever we went we found this spirit. People were hungry for something. They were reaching out for this something. Wherever we went we found that spirit. I'll tell you how we felt. We felt that there was some great Eternal Force at work, and that all we had to do was to get out of Its way. Our method was quite simple. It was a question of supply and demand. We knew that people wanted education; our business was to supply it. From the first we saw that we had to give what the people wanted, not to give them what we thought they ought to want. If a group in a town had wanted to study Football—very well, we would have started a class for them. Begin with what people really want; that's the secret. It's like electric light. You've got two wires—one wanting something, one able to give something; effect contact, and you get illumination. The thing was to make it a workers' business—a thing for themselves, an association of working-class people and scholars, not anything from outside them."

I asked him if Socialism had inspired him in this idea.

"Socialism! No; I'm not a socialist—not a political socialist, although my best friends are often

the extremest of socialists. To do my work I am compelled to stand clean outside politics. I want everything that will make life pure, beautiful, true. I don't care where it comes from. But I see one thing that can transform life, and that's what I'm after—the transformation of materialistic life. Christianity is the inclusive thing. Education means for me thinking on things that are beautiful, pure, and true. When you get your community thinking on things that are beautiful, pure, and true, you get your ideal State, and you'll never get it till then. Don't make any mistake about the spirit that founded the W.E.A. From the very first those who founded it and those who joined it were inspired by a love for the pure, the beautiful, and the true. It was a glorious movement because of this spirit. There was nothing sordid in it, nothing base and crooked. It was a clean thing inspired by the Spirit of God. I hate cleverness and knowledge: I hate your intellectual man: I hate all the pedantry of the mere brain. What I'm after is Wisdom. Wisdom is independent of knowledge, in the sense that the carpenter is independent of the tools he creates. Knowledge without wisdom is inimical. It's a dangerous thing. It spoils the man. Darwin, I suppose, would have admitted that. I've no time to waste helping clever people to pile up facts. I've no use in the educational movement for Gradgrind. Knowledge and skill without wisdom are no more than bricks and mortar. You can use them for building devil's houses. I don't mind people coming out of college knowing little so long as they're reaching out for right ends. They can be depended upon to seek

knowledge and to use it. That's the test—the hunger and thirst of the soul for truth, beauty, and goodness. Knowledge mustn't get exclusively into the hands of the materialists. Christianity must use knowledge. That's the point. Christianity must keep knowledge pure. It must save knowledge from materialism. The intellect is the least important part of a man—the spirit is the thing; that's the most important part of a man—his spirit. Why, look at the clever men you meet, with no joy, no enthusiasm, no love! What's the use of their knowledge? Such knowledge is destruction. The brain is put in the chief place, and the soul withers till nothing is left in the man's life but a few dusty pigeon-holes for facts. Our idea was the very reverse of this, even though Christianity was never mentioned in the W.E.A., which is open to all. We started with man's natural hunger and thirst for truth, beauty, and goodness. That exists in the soul of every man. You've only got to clear things away so that it can act, and then leave it to work out its own salvation. Go among our members and judge for yourself. All over England you'll find men and women working long hours at low pay, treasuring in their souls as the most precious possession of their lives this yearning after spiritual perfection—this hunger and thirst for truth, beauty, and goodness. They don't join our classes to improve their positions, to get higher wages, to climb into another social set—no vulgarity of that kind. They join those classes, making tremendous sacrifices, because they desire more light in their souls and a greater warmth in their hearts. The whole romance of the W.E.A. lies here. It has proved to the world that our democracy is dis-

interested and spiritual, that it is not materialistic and gross. Our members are the apostles of a new State—a Christian State in which the grabber and the profiteer and the sweater will find it impossible to breathe."

When he speaks in this fashion you feel that you are in the presence of a burning prophet—a man with his soul on fire, a man whose spirit is not a light to lighten the darkness, but a conflagration to set the whole world aflame. Nor does the frequent smile, breaking up the fierceness of his expression, lessen for a moment this sensation. You sit watching him as he leans restlessly forward in his chair, with scowling brows, flashing eyes, clenched teeth, and fist pounding away at his knee, listening to the harsh and hissing tones of his voice, feeling that you are in the presence of an apostle who cannot rest till you and all the world are equally aflame with him, who would go to the stake for his faith, and who *knows* that his gospel is the central truth of existence.

Gladly does he turn from all talk about himself to tell you about this wonderful movement which he started as a clerk, and which now covers the country and has spread throughout Australia and New Zealand, and is at work in Canada and South Africa. It is to him, in sober truth, a manifestation of the Spirit of God. He wanted, as the Salvationist wants, to save men's souls, to illumine them with the light of heaven. He found among working-class men and women a hunger for light, a sense of their own darkness, and he told them in ringing words, which some of them will never forget, that this light was within them, like the Kingdom of Heaven. It is his pas-

sionate faith that the soul of every man has this light burning within it, and that it is only the black shadow of a materialistic civilisation which flings a huge shadow between the light and the spirit.

"The kingdom of heaven is within us," he hisses out. "Nobody can give you the kingdom of heaven or lead you to it, or tell you where to go and look for it. Parliament can't make it. It isn't anything outside of us. It's within. It's within. We make our heaven and we make our hell by the thoughts we take into our souls. It's what we *want*, not what the world can give us, which makes us great or mean, strong or weak, happy or miserable. The whole idea of education has been wrong. Education is not a medicine. It isn't something to be poured into the mind. Education is the quest of God. It's—it's—it's the hunt of the soul for the Divine. When the soul breaks free from the shadow of a godless civilisation, and finds itself in its native sunlight, it begins at once to long for beauty, to long for truth, to long for goodness. It's like a hound with its nose to the scent. It's off on its hunt. It knows that it must be wretched without those possessions. What does it matter if a man lives in a cabin, and has nothing but bread and cheese to eat, and doesn't know what the morrow may bring; what does it matter so long as his soul is filled with thoughts that are pure, true, beautiful? I want education to be the great challenge of our vulgarities. I want it to stand in the midst of Vanity Fair to make Midas feel what an ass he is, and Dives how poor he is. That's what education must do. Education must make vulgarity laughable, and selfishness ridiculous, and ostentation a laughing-

stock. It's fine, it's grand, to think that this movement has come from the hard-worked and poor, that it's a movement of the working-classes, that the working-classes have seen the true character of education while all the other classes have acquiesced in its subordination to materialistic ends. There are miners and factory hands in the North who don't care twopence about increasing their wages or living in bigger houses or wearing finer clothes, but who can discuss Greek history with men like Alfred Zimmern, Greek poetry with men like Gilbert Murray, and Greek philosophy with men like W. H. Hadow. There are eight thousand men and women among the workers of this country who have completed a full course in University Tutorial Classes, which is equivalent to an Honours course, with a limitation of the subject, at any University. Think what it means to have those eight thousand dotted about the country—little centres of sound learning—spreading everywhere the influence of truth and beauty and goodness. It's only a beginning, but it has begun. The people of England have awakened, and they find themselves hungry. That old saying has come true. There's a hunger for spiritual life. It's going on among our fellows in France. There are educational classes just behind the firing line. The Oxford tutor is abroad in the land, and a new democracy is lifting up its head to the light. That's the work of the W.E.A.—the spreading of a new idea about Education. Men no longer think of school as a path to an office-desk or a pension. They no longer think of it as a mere discipline of boyhood. They see that it's spiritual food, that it goes on in manhood and woman-

hood, that it's life itself. They are beginning to feel in themselves a new moral superiority. The old gods of straw no longer suffice them. The old vices and distractions have a new littleness in their eyes. Their gaze is lifted up to the mountains. They don't want to get on in a bourgeois world, but they do want to live, they do want to reach out after perfection."

Again and again he impressed upon me that his part in this revolution is a slight one. The real spirit at the back of it came from democracy itself, inspired by the Spirit of God. And as for his part, what would he have done without his wife, without numberless working men, without Arnold Toynbee, without Canon Barnett, without J. B. Paton—" that glorious old man who lay on his death-bed like a youth confronting the dawn "—and many another.

" The history of the W.E.A. is a record," he told me, " of friendships wrought into a movement. Oxford and Cambridge have helped—helped enormously and splendidly. From the Board of Education I never received anything but sympathy and practical assistance. And there have been dozens of others—glorious men who have given themselves to this work. But the real thing is democracy itself. You get the truth in the remark of a Rochdale weaver to the Dean of Christchurch. After entertaining a party of workmen to discuss the possibilities of forming a Tutorial Class, the Dean said, ' It will cost a lot of money '; to which the Rochdale workman made answer, ' we're so hungry, that we hope you'll melt the college plate to feed us.' That's the spirit. The hunger of democracy. They're hungry. People don't realise how hungry they are. But they're hungry for spiritual

food, and out of this hunger is going to come the ideal community, the spiritual state which will carry men to the City of God."

There is a great deal of truth in what he says, for clearly the hunger of men had to be there for the bread of heaven to be necessary; but when Oxford conferred an honorary degree upon him in 1913 and the Prime Minister in 1915 a Civil List pension, they expressed the judgment of all educationalists in this country, that Albert Mansbridge had set on foot in England a movement of the very greatest importance. But for the devoted toil of this man—which a year or two ago brought him to the edge of the grave with an attack of cerebro-meningitis—but for his devotion, his utter selflessness, and his burning enthusiasm, but for the love he had in his heart for God and man, but for his own spiritual hungering and thirsting after perfection, there could have been no Workers' Educational Association.

I have left this narrative to the last because, more than any of the others, it brings home to the minds of men the most important fact they can learn about democracy.

Democracy is feeling its way from dissatisfaction and disappointment to a life that it feels must be waiting for the sons of men. It is groping its way in a darkness which has of late been lighted up by the conflagration of Europe—a flame of War which has at least exposed the insufficiencies and insecurities of the burning world. A new world has to be fashioned, and since the old world was of so false a character that it could come to this violent end, democracy, with justice, is considering how it may build a new world,

looking to none of its former guides for instruction and assistance. It has lost all its superstitions and most of its reverences.

For the moment democracy's gaze is bent upon the economic functions of life. The working - men students of the W.E.A.'s tutorial classes are asking for lectures on history and economics. I attended one of these classes at Cradley Heath, and heard Mr. Gerard Collier lecturing to a group of serious men on the economic basis of society, and listened to the questions with which he was affectionately plied when the lecture was over. "The lecture is one," as Albert Mansbridge loves to quote, "the discussion is one thousand." It was in the discussion that I learned how earnestly, even how fiercely, the minds of working-men are groping for a juster order of civilisation. They wanted to know why capital should go on taxing industry for ever, why a sum of £100 invested in a company should earn £5 a year for ever and ever, and why the toil of the labourer should be taxed to pay the interest on our mountainous war debt. They asked questions about the conscription of wealth. One of them even suggested that the interest on our War Loans should be violently reduced—either that, or that the debt itself should be repudiated. In all this there was no class hatred, no fierceness of anarchy, but the serious inquiry of serious minds seeking a way out of darkness and slavery to the light of God and the feeedom of man's soul. I felt, not how they hated the other classes, but how they hated darkness and slavery.

This mood is likely to continue. In Yorkshire it is assuming rather a grim and menacing character, par-

ticularly in the hideous cities and towns; but I am convinced that it will pass, and that democracy, with the economic foundations of a more reasonable social order well and truly laid, will once more turn its whole soul to the pursuit of truth, beauty, and goodness.

In "The English Flower Garden" Mr. William Robinson reminds us that while the aristocracy and middle classes of these islands went mad during the last century over the carpenter's rule in the garden, so that you could visit scarcely a single country house without finding it surrounded by painful ugliness as meaningless and atrocious as linoleum patterning, the little gardens of the peasants maintained at the cottage door the ancient and exquisite traditions of the true English flower-garden.

So it is, I think, that democracy is now at this time cherishing the ancient ideal of English education—that ideal which gave us the lovely colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, and illumined the chronicles of England with the names of great scholars—while all about it the other classes are degrading education and making it only one of the vulgarities of a materialistic society. And as the Victorian gardener came back at last to the mixed border of the cottage, so we may hope that the college don and the middle-class schoolmaster may turn back to the poor student of slum and hamlet and give us once more in England a spirit of Education which will dignify and sweeten our national life.

That is our greatest hope for the future. We need, not merely an enlightened democracy, but a new, purer, and more liberal spirit in the whole nation. We need an aristocracy of genius and a democracy seeking

those things which alone can satisfy the soul of man. Only education can give us this aristocracy and this great nation.

I cannot make a better end of this chapter than by printing here a speech delivered at Oxford in 1907 by the present secretary of the Workers' Educational Associatoin, Mr. J. M. Mactavish, who suddenly cut short a rather formal and donnish discussion with a speech which breathes the authentic spirit of democracy. In this speech the reader will find a vigorous and honourable expression of the demand which democracy makes on society, and also he will find in it, I think, a shadowing forth of the new order of things which is even now being brought to birth.

SPEECH BY Mr. J. M. MACTAVISH AT THE OXFORD CONFERENCE, 1907

We have submitted to us for our consideration a matter of extreme interest and importance: "What Workpeople want Oxford to do for Them" and "What Oxford can do for the Workpeople."

If I had been consulted I would have suggested a third; and it would have been, "What Workpeople can do for Oxford." There is nothing that Oxford can do for us that we cannot repay her four hundredfold.

I am not here, therefore, as a suppliant for my class. I decline to sit at the rich man's gate praying for crumbs. I claim for my class all the best of all that Oxford has to give. I claim it as a right—wrongfully

withheld—wrong not only to us but to Oxford. What is the true function of a University? Is it to train the nation's best men, or to sell its gifts to the rich? Instead of recruiting her students from the widest possible area, she has restricted her area of selection to the fortunate few. They come to her not for intellectual training, but for veneering. Not only are workpeople deprived of the right of access to that which belongs to no class or caste, the accumulated knowledge and experience of the race, but Oxford herself misses her true mission, while the nation and race lose the services of its best men. I emphasise that point because I wish it to be remembered that workpeople could do far more for Oxford than Oxford can do for the workpeople. For, remember, democracy will realise itself, with or without the assistance of Oxford; but if Oxford continues to stand apart from the workpeople, then she will ultimately be remembered, not for what she is but for what she has been. And now having made good my claim, or our claim, to her best services, what is it that workpeople want from Oxford? So far as the multitude of them is concerned, absolutely nothing. Their struggle is not for education; it is for bread—and in that struggle they become stolid and stunted, brothers to the ox. They are what they are, however, not altogether, but very largely because Oxford has not given us of her best. But speaking for myself, and for thousands more who are like-minded, we want from Oxford all that Mr. Nield has asked, and a great deal more. More especially do we want something more definite. We want workpeople who come to Oxford to undertake definite work. But what is that definite

work to be? We want them to come back to us as missionaries, but what is their message to be? If workpeople are to come to Oxford, and they are to be trained for the great task of lifting their class, which is no class but the nation—if they are to come to Oxford to be trained for this great task, then the study—as has already been pointed out—the study of history and economics is an essential part of that definite work. But what school of economics does Oxford accept as authority? Will her interpretation of history inspire a man to remain in his class, or will it imbue him with a desire to escape from his class, which is supposed to have no history, or only one of menial service? Let us be frank with Oxford in this matter, because unless she understands what we want she can do nothing for us. The economics which emanate from Oxford are well-adapted to meet the requirements and stimulate the minds of those young gentlemen who frequent her colleges, and because they are reduced to a science of social conduct and industrial practice which has made them and keeps them comfortable. But you cannot expect the people to enthuse over a science which promises them no more than a life of precarious toil.

Her histories square with her economics. They are the records not of a nation but of a class; while her interpretation of them lends weight to the litany of our older aristocracy:

"God bless the squire and his relations,
And keep us in our proper stations."

We want from Oxford a new science of national and international economics—a science that will teach us the true relationship between production and con-

sumption; that will teach us the true economic relationship in which men ought to stand to men, and men to women—a science based, not on the acquisitiveness of the individual, but on social utility. Even as much do we want from her a new interpretation of history—not one that will continuously remind us that we are on edge of the abyss, but one that will inspire us; not the short and simple annals of the poor, but the history of the people. For although we are supposed to have no recorded history, without us all history was and is impossible. And here let me say that I believe that one of the reasons, if not the great reason, why our University Extension lectures have not been successful is due to the fact that the average University Extension lecturer is decidedly middle and upper-class in his outlook. I have seen a series of lectures on that fascinating subject the French Revolution given in a very big hall to a mere handful, not because the lecturer did not know his subject, or because he lacked lucidity of expression, but because his point of view was decidedly middle-class. The sufferings of the people, their ready response to the high but impracticable ideals of "Liberty, fraternity and equality," were but lightly touched on, or altogether ignored. His lectures were the records of a few great men. But those men only shone because the people provided them with a background. If our University Extension lectures are to do the work they were expected to do, then not only must the subjects be carefully selected, but the matter so arranged that it will appeal to and inspire those they are intended for. Further, let me remind Oxford that our economic disadvantage places us at the mercy of the gentlemen

that she trains. The man in the street can see that University Education enables the son of a working-man to escape from his class; but he does not see that it builds up that sense of human solidarity which is essential to the lifting of the class itself. The sons of the working-man come to Oxford to escape from their class, not to lift it. We want Oxford to open wide her doors to the best of our people, and take them in. We want her to send them back to us as doctors whose business will be health-giving, not wealth-getting; we want her to send them back to us as lawyers whose business will be justice, not fees; we want her to send them back to us as living teachers, not mechanical manipulators of child-life. We want her to inspire them, not with the idea of getting on, but with the idea of social service. Let her send forth an army of such men, armed at all points for the defence of the people, but more especially for the defence of our children; for it is through them she will have her reward . And, finally, let me say to young people: Strive to come to Oxford. To Oxford I say: Open wide your doors and take us in; we need you; you need us.

CONCLUSION

We live in an age of unexampled economic expansion: Natural Science and the many industries and organisations called into being by Natural Science have attracted, as is only natural, the best and most vigorous brains of our time; and our thinkers are still so much impressed, and even bewildered, by the possibilities thus opened out to them that they have not yet recovered their steadiness of vision. They have not yet succeeded in schooling their imaginations to the fact that wealth and organisation are not ends in themselves, that it is possible for a society to go back in happiness and real well-being with every step in its forward march in material prosperity and organisation.

ALFRED E. ZIMMERN,
"*The Greek Commonwealth.*"

IT is possible, I hope, from the stories in this book to form an opinion as to the way in which the mind of Labour is now working.

Among the older men there is an increasing scepticism as to the capacity of the Labour representatives to bring about a Socialistic State, and among the younger men a distinct contempt both for Liberalism and the Labour Party as the latter is now represented in Parliament. The older men are for the moment a steadying influence; they are the sons of Victorian thrift, owning their own houses and mindful of the vast capital sums invested by the Trades Unions; but I am convinced that their influence is waning, and that a period of serious industrial distress might see that influence shaken down. The younger men are impatient of the present system.

The peaceful evolution of our English nation is threatened by this impatience of the younger men. Among them one finds the idealist and the careful thinker, but for the most part they are rather reckless, certainly materialistic, and, I should say, undisciplined thinkers. Education has only touched their minds. They rebel against the tedious monotony of the automatic machine, against the miserable houses in which they live, against the power of the employer to turn them adrift, against the uneventfulness of their lives, and, unconsciously, against the emptiness of their own souls. These men, I feel certain, would have this same rebellion in their minds if they worked for only six hours a day and earned double the wages which they now receive. They are wretched because they have no inward life. They are cynical, disillusioned, and embittered because they have eyes only for the visible.

We must remember that the leisured classes of the community set these half-educated workmen a bad example. There is no feeling in the national life of great spiritual ideals, no strong sense of the importance of moral values. The atmosphere is materialistic. The tide of English life flows strongly towards individual success, personal luxury, selfish enjoyment. Wherever the workman looks he sees the flaunting arrogance of wealth. He is conscious of a pressure all about him towards the satisfactions of materialism. The spirit of Oxford is invisible to him; the refinement of the educated classes is unknown to him; the goodness and modesty of so many of the aristocracy are hidden from him. He sees nothing but the reach-

ing out of the grabbing hand; hears nothing but the cry of "More!"

If we would ensure the peaceful evolution of the English State we must, I am quite sure, seriously address ourselves to the supreme question of human life, to which our younger democracy has not yet given a decided answer. Like the disappointed lover in Shakespeare, our youth is answering this question now with a russet yea and now with a kersey no, never summoning all its forces to give a definitely, deliberately, intelligent answer; but it is a question which must be answered one way or the other, and it should be answered in such a manner as to inspire national action.

Is life an affair of the body or the soul? Is the trough our objective, or the stars? Are we here to feed our bodies, or our minds? Is the brain merely the weapon of the belly, or is it the instrument of the soul? What is it we are seeking, gear or goodness? Where is the kingdom of heaven, within us or without us?

It is unfortunate for the community that the Church, which should ever have been the chiefest assailant of materialism, has so largely lost its authority with the masses. It is now suspect. It means little more to the congested populations of industrial cities than the Conservative or the Liberal Party. It does not only insist upon particular affirmations in dogmatic theology which have ceased to have significance or interest for the present generation, but it seems to be, in the eyes of democracy, associated with the forces of selfishness—their interests its interests. Democracy, then, has no instrument to its hand for

fighting materialism, and no leadership to guide it on the road of victory. Out of its own ranks it must forge a new instrument, and provide its own leadership.

This is the situation at the moment. And this is the peril.

The youth of Democracy, which has not yet formulated an answer to the question of life, is looking about it for a weapon and a leader. How can it alter things? It has no real vision and no real enthusiasm. It is only tired of things as they are, only angry with circumstance, only conscious of an exterior oppression. What will it do with its vast power if it has no light on its path and no captain in its soul?

Our peril is that this young leaderless Democracy has formulated no thesis of life.

I feel convinced that what is immediately essential for our peace is a change of will in the whole community—a change of mind which will not only affect Parliament but municipalities, and not only the employer but the private citizen. This change of mind has been described by Edward Caird in his account of Christianity's first effect on Greek and Roman civilisation, already quoted in these pages:

"It broke down all the walls of division that had hitherto separated individuals, families, and nations from each other; it cast aside and utterly repudiated all the prejudices of rank and caste, of race and custom, and bade men, as simply men, recognise each other as brethren. It sought, in the fire of its charity, to burn up every grudge and repugnance, every doubt and suspicion that had made men regard each other

with alien eyes, and to put an end to all the waste of human existence in competition and conflict by binding them into the unity of one body, animated by one will and one spirit."

Christianity gave to the world "a new view of social duty." We forget that historic fact. We have lost all sense of it in the confusions of theological disputations and the treacheries of ecclesiasticism. But I suppose no priest or minister could be found who would presume to dispute this essential fact of early Christian history, the fact that Christianity stood for an entirely new view of social duty, that it asserted the absolute brotherhood of men, and that its whole tendency was to cultivate the sense of the community rather than the sense of the individual.

Have we not definitely lost this saving sense of social duty? Is it not even true, strictly true, that powerful political parties exist to fight every tendency which makes in this direction?

But is it out of reason to hope for a change of heart in modern England? We might have thought so in the summer of 1914, but now surely no man can doubt that it is possible. The youth of the nation has suffered itself to be crucified for the good of posterity. Such anguish of spirit, such agony of body, have been suffered by the youth of this country as no words can utter, no imagination can conceive. And this suffering has been endured only for a moral ideal. This valour, this heroism, is entirely selfless. No man has stretched himself upon the cross of war in hope of honour or fortune; no man holding the British line against the hurricane of German shells and the avalanche of German infantry has thought of wages

or reward; the rearguards who died to save the world, who died rather than surrender or retire, sacrificed themselves, their youth, their hopes, their affections, for the sake of others; the agony has been borne because of an ideal, because of something hardly to be expressed in language, because it was right, because freedom and love and kindness and honour were in peril.

If for us and our children these young men have suffered so dreadful an agony, giving their lives for us, can it be out of reason to suppose that we who are left behind to rebuild the house of life will henceforth think as much of others as of ourselves? Can we, in common decency, without utmost shame, do less?

Nothing seems to me more inevitable than this, that if—after so tremendous a sacrifice for idealism on the part of our youth—we return to the old selfishness, the old individualism, the old materialism, and the old vulgarities of the past, retribution will be swift and violent.

> Where bled her children hangs the loaded sheaf.
> Forgetful is green earth; the Gods above
> Remember everlastingly: they strike
> Remorselessly, and ever like for like.
> By their great memories the Gods are known.

Let us assure ourselves of this—that Democracy is seeking a new way of life only because the present way is manifestly bad. Democracy is not jealous of the rich or greedy for mere goods, or inspired by a blind class hatred. It is a most patient, good-humoured, virtuous, and kindly democracy—on the whole, surely there is no democracy in the world to

compare with it for the great fundamental virtues of Christianity. But it is thinking hard, and a new realism has come to it, and it knows that the present system cannot endure.

It is significant of the character of modern democracy that it has lost its faith in the demagogue. Where local grievances are concerned the tub-thumper may be sure of an audience, and the more violent he is the better pleased are his congregations. But where it is a matter of vital reconstruction even the greatest of Parliamentary orators has now little weight with the thinking workman. He wants ideas, not words; leadership not perorations. To a statesman like Lord Haldane, who makes no pretence at oratory, audiences of working men all over the country will listen with patience and interest, and in none of his speeches does he ever flatter the workman or descend to materialism. This is one of the singnificant facts of the day which London newspapers should not ignore. Lord Haldane is recognised by democracy as a statesman with ideas. When he went to Swindon recently crowds of workmen cheered him as he drove to the station, calling out, "Come and help the Labour Party." This ovation followed upon a speech in which Lord Haldane had insisted on the moral and spiritual ideals of Democracy.

It is perhaps impossible to judge the Labour movement from London. One must go to Birmingham and travel northward if one would know what the workman is thinking—the workman who never reads a London newspaper, but who attends tutorial classes on economics and reads the Greek philosophers at his fireside. I would venture to warn the leisured classes

of the South of England against taking their ideas of Democracy from the London newspapers or their ideas of the Labour Party entirely from its representatives in Parliament. There is a new spirit at work in our midst—a spirit which at once threatens the State with violent change and yet is its chief hope of a strengthened survival. On the manner in which the whole community receives this new spirit of Democracy hang the fortunes of the British Commonwealth. It is a spirit which can be led into the paths of reason, but which can no more be cheated of its hopes by the professional politician than it can be paralysed by abuse or destroyed by indifference.

GUILD SOCIALISM : VIEWS OF LORD LEVERHULME ON ITS LATEST THEORY

IN the speeches on a Six Hours Day which he has lately delivered in the chief industrial centres of England and Scotland, Lord Leverhulme has subjected Socialism to a criticism as distinctive as it is good-tempered. He has shown, as it is perhaps easy to show, that Socialism involves the loss of personal freedom, that it takes away from the workman his right not merely to sell his labour as he chooses, but even to do the work he would desire to do. " Socialism is another word for State Slavery."

The answer to this criticism is that the critic attacks a political theory which has ceased to interest Social Reformers. He is criticising State Socialism, and State Socialism is dead. The new gospel is the gospel of Guild Socialism, and this political theory, which appears to be gaining ground, is as earnestly opposed to State Socialism as the ancient gospel of Individualism. I asked Lord Leverhulme for his answer to this criticism.

" The first bother in the matter of discussing Socialism," he said, " is the fact that it has no definition. Knock it down on one ground, and up it comes a few moments after on another ground. It has never thought itself into a definition; it is too busy, I suppose, abandoning one theory for another. It doesn't answer its critics. It runs away, puts on a new coat, and starts preaching in a different key. Quite frankly, I regard every form of Socialism as the same thing in another coat. But if you ask me what I think of Guild Socialism in particular, and as a serious contribution to political thought, well, let's see how it affects the community.

" To begin with, the principle which underlies every form of Socialism is, in my opinion, vicious. For what is that principle? It is concerned simply with achieving social betterment by means of dividing up the wealth now in existence. It is not creative. You can divide up the wealth which now exists by a system of graduated income-tax and graduated death duties—that is quite easy. No Socialistic philosopher is necessary. But

the way to social betterment is not along this road. It cannot be along that road. The way to social betterment lies along the road of creation. What we have got to do is not to subtract and divide, but to add and multiply. That's the point. The progress of humanity is not delayed by an unfair distribution of wealth, but by an insufficiency of wealth. The true reformer is creative. He leaves the little people to fight about the crumbs which are falling from the table of life, and goes out into the world to plough up more acres of wilderness. All forms of Socialism, I don't care what they call themselves, are concerned with the wealth now in existence. Therefore, Socialism is a reactionary force. Individualism, on the other hand, is concerned with the creation of fresh wealth, and this is why Individualism is the gospel of the strong.

"There are forms of Individualism which are as reactionary as Socialism. The Boer is individualistic. He takes a farm of 5,000 acres, plants his little house in the middle, cultivates 50 acres round his door, and uses the other 4,950 acres chiefly to keep other people away from him. That kind of Individualism is bound to perish. It will perish, not beneath the little hammer-taps of Socialism, but at the touch of Truth. Truth is a great power. It is simply the right way of doing things. If Socialism is the right way of doing things, it will triumph. I am quite certain that when the general community can do things better than the individual, Individualism will go. The better way will always win. But I am equally certain that no form of Socialism has yet been suggested which can create wealth. And that for me is its final condemnation. What is Guild Socialism? Isn't it only another name for Syndicalism? It simply means that the workmen of an industry will control that industry. It means that we are to run our trades by committees. Is that impossible? No; it is quite possible. The criticism which Guild Socialism cannot face is by no means a denial of its claim that a great business can be done by committee. You could hand your railways over to a committee. You could run the Cunard Company by a committee. You could run Liberty's shop by a committee. As for my own business, I'd rather leave it to a committee than to an individual. That's not the point. Socialism can step in when the creative work is done. I grant that quite heartily. My point is,

and I call it vital, that Socialism could never have *created* the Cunard Company, or Liberty's business, or the great concern of Sir Jesse Boot, or any of the other vast undertakings in this country. Those things are the creation of individuals. No committees could have set them going; no committees could have carried them on in the first dangerous years of their existence. For work of that kind the will-passion of an individual is essential. And work of that kind involves far more labour and sacrifice than the Socialist imagines.

"I don't want to talk about myself, but as it happens my business is a case in point. When I was making a profit of £50,000 a year I was living in a £35 house. Why? Because every farthing I could spare from my cost of living went back into the business. I didn't want to risk other people's money. I was perfectly willing to stake my own. That was the price I paid for the right to control my business, the right to create my own idea. Socialists like to draw a caricature of the capitalist. They think that his one idea is money. They are so entirely given up to subtraction and division that they cannot conceive of the creative passion. But this creative passion is the driving force of Individualism. It isn't only the money he sees coming to him which makes a man labour from morning to night at his business, practising self-denial and risking all he possesses in the venture; it's the dream of the thing he is erecting, it's the joy of the power he feels in his act of creation, it's the excitement of measuring his qualities against the obstacles in his path. Take away these opportunities from men, and you would reduce the national life to a nullity. I'd sooner be a market-gardener, cultivating a few acres of earth, than take the wages of Guild Socialism. The Socialists talk about 'employing capital.' But can they buy direction? Do they suppose that any man of initiative would stay in a country where he was bound by the mandates of a Soviet? Why, every creative mind in England would go to individualistic nations, and England would become like a Sussex village—a village that was once a flourishing town because of the iron industry, but now is sleepy, exhausted, finished. Socialism, taking away our chief driving-force, would make us lag behind individualistic nations. We should become as dead and codfish-eyed as a Government Department.

" The salt of England has been her passionate individualism. Something in English nature has always opposed itself to every form of slavery. The Government has not created the British Empire. That great Empire, the resources of which we have hardly begun to touch, is the creation of bold and adventurous individuals; and the Government actually found it hard to grasp what those individuals brought to it and had to force into its hands. Do you think the British Empire could be run on salaries? Do you think we could exist as a great people if there wasn't room in our midst for high adventure, the boldest daring, and the fullest personal freedom? Of course we couldn't.

" But Guild Socialism sees the creative mind as the enemy of the people! Every man who leaves comfort and security, and hazards his all in a great venture, is held up as an exploiter. Socialism is willing enough to take over the fruit of his labours, to divide it up, to manage it by committees, even to employ the wicked exploiter—if he's a particularly sharp fellow; but until that consummation is reached, the creator of this business is denounced as a greedy anti-social and monstrous person, the enemy of the people. What nonsense it is! Well, isn't it?

" The answer to the claim of the Guild Socialist is simple enough. Guild Socialism cannot serve the chief need of democracy. It would not enrich, it would impoverish, democracy. It could keep things going, and that is all. But is that enough? Surely not! The chief need of the nation is an increase of wealth. We do not suffer from unequal distribution : we suffer from insufficiency. To make life happier for the whole nation our duty is not to divide what now exists, but to multiply it a thousandfold. Ah! that's the point—multiply, multiply. The true statesman is he whose mind is bent on increasing national wealth. The man who thinks only of a fresh distribution of existing wealth is a little fellow—a mere politician. It is the greatest condemnation of the Socialist, the greatest proof of his narrow vision and his little timid mind, that he never sets himself to the task of creating more wealth. Study all the books, articles, and speeches on Socialism, and you find in every one of them their betrayal of a petty mind. The Socialist cannot bring himself to the thought of creation. He can't rise to that height. He originates nothing. I don't say that Socialists are insincere : I

say they are wrong. I don't say they are envious or jealous or bad patriots: I say they are petty. The future of the world does not belong to little minds; it belongs to an enlightened Individualism, conscious of moral responsibility, and inspired by the idea of the general welfare."

We spoke of his theory of a Six-Hour Day.

"This idea," he said, "is gaining ground. It has suffered by misrepresentation in the newspapers, owing no doubt to the brevity which restrictions of space impose on the reporter. It is thought, for example, that I advocate six hours' activity in our workshops and factories. What I advocate, of course, is a twelve-hours' activity, instead of eight, dividing up this increased activity into two shifts of six hours each. The problem, as I see it, is a simple one. I want to increase wages; if possible, to double them. If we double wages and keep output at its present rate, the increase of wages will be of no service to the worker. Everything he buys will cost him twice as much. The only increase in wages which can better the lot of the worker is one which leaves the price of the product unaffected—or, better still, which reduces it. How can we compass this? Clearly, by so improving our machinery that a man paid double his present wages and working only six hours a day instead of eight, can turn out double and treble the amount of things which he turns out now. To increase wealth we must increase production. To increase production at the cost of the worker's health, never mind what wages you pay him, would not be a social reform. The strain must be put, not on the man, but on the machine. Improve your machinery and keep it working as hard as you can, and you reduce the price of the product. To reduce the price of the product means to increase the demand for it, and with the workers earning high wages and enjoying longer leisure the demand would be enormous. This, it seems to me, is the way to social betterment. I don't care what name is given to the system under which we live so long as it encourages the strong to use their strength for the production of wealth and encourages the weak to use what strength they possess for the same purpose. Call it Socialism or Individualism—it doesn't matter a bit what you call it—but the system under which we must all live and work together if we are to go ahead and keep our place in the world, is a system aimed

at the production of wealth. And the State must be glad and proud to reward those of its sons who lead the way in this direction. The hope of great reward has founded the British Empire. It will always be so. Men want a prize for their labours. The boldest spirits of a nation will never work for a salary. They must be free to express themselves how they will: they must be free to run risks and make sacrifices: and they must have the hope before their eyes of great and splendid rewards if they succeed. You may safely rely on public opinion to keep their moral ideas in motion; and if you want to interfere with their earnings you can increase their income-tax and the duty on the fortunes they leave behind them. But if you want progress, leave these men as free as possible—as free as the workmen to do the work he wants to do, and to leave one job for another. All efforts to restrict enterprise are anti-social; and all efforts that encourage humanity to produce more wealth, with less exertion each succeeding year, are Socialistic in the right sense of the word: they tend to raise the social position of the whole of the people."

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